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Imprint in Classical Literature

In honor of beloved Virgil—

“O degli altri poeti onore e lume . . .”

—Dante, *Inferno*

This One



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The Poet and the Prince

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Ovid and Augustan Discourse

Alessandro Barchiesi

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hunc ego cum spectem, videor mihi cernere Romam

Ex Ponto 2.8.19

credulitas nunc mihi vestra nocet

Amores 3.12.44

Le roi est mort, vive le roi!

Frazer, *The Golden Bough*

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Acknowledgments

As I present the revised edition of *Il poeta e il principe* (1994), it is still easy for me to go back in time and acknowledge some formative influences on the book. But before I thank some of my influences by naming them, I feel that a couple of more general remarks can be helpful to reconstruct (or construct) my genealogy. First, I was trained in classics at Pisa (State University and Scuola Normale) in the seventies: this was a period when a student working on Roman literature would perceive a strong polarization between “formal” and “historical” interpretation of literary texts. I hope the book will clarify what I mean by this. It is enough to say that since then I have felt the need to experiment with readings of classical poetry that could resist or displace or trespass any fixed borderline between “form” and “history,” literature and culture, or even “poetics” and “politics.” The book came simply because I discovered only lately that Ovid’s *Fasti*, and Ovid’s work in general, could be a fruitful space of inquiry for such a project. Both the formal/structural tradition and the historicist tradition have been pursued in Italy with great vigor and polemical engagement: my book can be read, I think, as an attempt to dismantle the militarized frontier or to inhabit a no-man’s-land. It is perhaps too detailed and formalistic for serious historians, too preoccupied with the cultural context for more relaxed philologists.

Second, to start now from a less ambitious statement, I must confess an old interest in a minimalist problem of interpretation. Every Ovidian

scholar could tell you that the fourth line of *Metamorphoses*, *ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen*, is one of the most tantalizing moments in the whole of Latin poetry. *Perpetuum*, “continuous,” encapsulates a whole debate about the nature of that poem and its genre, structure, relationship to models, and poetics. Much less attention has been paid to the first line of the *Fasti*, *Tempora cum causis Latium digesta per annum*, and even less to the implications of *digesta*, “distributed,” “discontinuous.” So, if *perpetuum* is viewed as a key to the epic poem, why not try *digesta* as a meaningful description of the elegiac poem? I was greatly helped here by a very formalistic—and therefore in the end *more* than formal—observation pointed out to me by Michael Reeve about the textual transmission of the *Fasti*.¹ From this I began to look for ways in which the meaning of the poem is constituted—in a cultural context, I guess—through its peculiar, fragmented, and Callimachean format.

I have updated bibliography and notes where possible and have systematically revised the text, but I have not incorporated comments about publications which appeared after my book. Some are quite compatible with my approach.² The book of Geraldine Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti* (Oxford 1994), is very different from mine and could generate a fruitful dialogue, but in fact my book already owes much to a book which belongs in the same category as Herbert-Brown’s: Augusto Frascchetti, *Roma e il principe* (Roma-Bari 1990). I have learned from Frascchetti’s historical methodology and tried to contrast some of his readings of Ovidian poetry. I have also learned much from the work of Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Simon Price, especially because those new studies of Augustan culture are discouraging all of us from viewing the literary texts as either simply “oppositional” or simply “orthodox” and from reading poetry as a reflex of a prefab ideology.³

1. See below, p. 103, and for a characteristically brief assessment (one page) by Reeve himself, in Pecere and Reeve 1995, 507–8.

2. See especially Newlands 1995; Krevans 1997.

3. I recommend the balanced and fair discussions of Herbert-Brown’s book, together with mine, by Elaine Fantham (1995) and Philip Hardie (1995). I also refer briefly to an important paper by Fergus Millar, “Ovid and the Domus Augusta” (1993). Millar teaches us how to use Ovid as a witness of the atmosphere of political change in the late Augustan and Imperial period, but I am not very impressed by his description of Ovid as a “loyalist”—perhaps because the idea and the word are so foreign to the Italian tradition. However, it will be seen that Ovid’s political ideas are not an important concern in my own work. And I certainly was very impressed and influenced by Millar’s paper on “the impact of monarchy” (Millar 1984).

Another surprise after the publication of my Italian text: given my interest in Ovid’s version of the death of Remus, it was a shock to discover that this version of the myth—with the surviving brother exculpating himself and lamenting the political homicide as a

Several people helped me at different stages with this book and/or its first Italian version: Leslie-Anne Crowley, a specialist of English literature at the University of Brescia, who agreed to translate most of the Italian original, perhaps in commemoration of her classical background at Oxford; Mario De Nonno; Francis Dunn; Alice Falk; Marco Fantuzzi; Denis Feeney; Don Fowler; Philip Hardie; Stephen Hinds, who showed me the manuscript of his fundamental paper, here cited as Hinds 1992; Pauline Hire; Tom Jenkins; Mary Lamprech; Alessandro Laterza; Georgia Nugent; Alessandro Schiesaro; and Charles Segal and the anonymous referees for the Press.⁴ Grazie.

I quote the *Fasti* from the Teubner text of Alton, Wormell, and Courtney (1985) and occasionally from the outstanding English translation of Betty Rose Nagle (Bloomington 1995), a timely publication which supports and stimulates a renewed interest in the poem in the English-speaking world.

Verona, Arezzo, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995

deplorable mistake—had influenced a primary school textbook in the time of Mussolini. So a whole generation of Italians were taught how to be a good Fascist by an elegiac Romulus.

4. I also thank my colleagues at the classics department in Verona, as well as the classicists at the University of Cambridge, who invited me to an inspiring Laurence Seminar on the *Fasti* in the summer of 1990.

Introduction

COINCIDENCES AND PROBLEMS

This book is about an emperor and a poet who are also, for our contemporary culture, Emperor and Poet, Regime and Art. What I mean is that this subject has a sort of implicit magnetic polarity in it, which forces every new interpreter into the position of having to choose between opposing fields and thus to say good-bye to his or her own neutrality. If I try to forget for the moment that I am a philologist and look at the question instead through the eyes of a contemporary storyteller (or of more than one contemporary storyteller), it will be quicker and easier for me to retrace in your company the origins of this paradox.

It is probably a coincidence—but perhaps it is an invitation to reread Ovid—that in the space of a few years no fewer than three interesting works of fiction with Ovid as their hero have been published. They are not about Ovid in general, but about the exiled poet and his life in the gloomy new world of the Black Sea.¹ The first of these is *Sogni di sogni*, an airy little story, like a dream or a butterfly. One January night in Tomi the poet dreams (through Antonio Tabucchi) that he has been transformed into a butterfly. He is brought back to Rome, where in a fluttering dance he offers the emperor some poems which should win back his favor: but he is rejected and scorned, his wings are torn off, and he is sent

1. Tabucchi 1992; Ransmayr 1988; Malouf 1978.

back into exile. That is all, and there is no final moral: after all, this is a dream as seen by a modern writer (*Amores* 3.5 and *Ex Ponto* 3.3 tell us of very different ways of dreaming). But the emperor's reaction to Ovid's poetic dance corresponds to a shadowy zone in our studies on the poetry of his exile: why exactly did these poems fail to achieve their purpose? This fluent narrator and master of fiction never managed to persuade the Caesars to unbar the way for his return. This question can be answered in many ways, but it is important to remember the scene of the butterfly: these poems constitute a public gesture, and this presupposes that they should have an addressee;² the Caesars were certainly among their principal addressees, and attentive consideration must be constantly given to their reception of Ovid's text. Here, in fact, in the last chapter of this book, we shall try to transform Augustus and Tiberius into readers, or, to use another commonly accepted term, into narratees.

Our second work of fiction about Ovid, entitled *Die letzte Welt* (The extreme world), again presents the poet as victim of the regime. The text of the *Metamorphoses* is in danger of being lost, scattered over the wild countryside of Tomi. With great difficulty, a fragment is recovered from a stone column covered with slimy snails, and its final words are, ironically enough, "my name will never be wiped out" (*Met.* 15.876). Christoph Ransmayr interweaves the story of Ovid's exile with the survival of the *Metamorphoses*, a prophecy on Ovid's part which this novel, after all, fulfills. Ovid has become notorious in Rome as the result of a scandalously successful play in which "the names of well-known company chairmen, parliamentarians, and judges are also mentioned, hidden in palindromes and spoonerisms."³ Oh dear, palindromes and spoonerisms; it is embarrassing and worrying for a philologist to recognize the risks of his own craft. If Ovid was banished from Rome (and this at least seems verifiable), how far is his work to be interpreted in the light of this event? How much "opposition" is scattered through his poetry, and how can a degree of agreement be reached on how to interpret it?

In the period that has seen the writing and publishing of Ransmayr's "cryptographic" Ovid, there are not a few persecuted artists living in our own real and concrete world. In his own poems Joseph Brodsky plays on a paradoxical reversal of Ovid's situation, having been sent into exile from the icefields of Scythia to the marble city of Rome. Meanwhile, the

2. The analogy between writing and dancing is anticipated in a tortured conceit by Ovid himself—"writing in this situation is like dancing in the dark" (*Pont.* 4.2.33)—where the issue of composing in the Black Sea for a Roman audience is also central.

3. Ransmayr 1988, 40.

Ovid of Ransmayr's novel is presented as a mirror for ever new victims of ever more terrible persecutions, and the effects of Ovid's text are ever more closely interwoven with those of its reception.

It is strange and perhaps perverse that artists who are the victims of concrete acts of violence should continue to hark back to the figure of Ovid. First of all, these references imply an appeal to a public of readers, a largely Western public that enjoys solidarity, and many of whose members still find a common model of expression in classical culture. It is however debatable whether and to what extent these classical images make communication more or less efficient. On the one hand, literary analogies weaken the effect of immediacy. On the other hand, in its very fragility the classical model is a speaking picture of the powerlessness that the exile recognizes in his own forced condition: Ovid's model, so remote and mannered, is the signifier of a cry of weakness, the voice of a loser whose only possible appeal is to the solidarity of his readers. Evidently no immediate and "sincere" language exists for speaking of such experiences, and nor did it exist for Ovid, since (and I shall tackle this "coincidence" later) his poems of exile are given over to performances where a dominant role is played by the language of aesthetics and of literary criticism. The more his readers expect "real life" from an artist who would have so much of his own to tell us (how does it feel to be persecuted by the emperor? What is life like on the margins of the Roman Empire?), the more the poet continues to answer through the ghosts of his Alexandrian culture.

There is a third contemporary novel about Ovid in exile that still remains to be mentioned, David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*. The picture that Malouf conveys of the banished poet is a good example of the anti-Augustan myth, by which I mean that insidious connection that enables the Augustan cause both to imply and to control its apparent opposition. At times Malouf's exiled Ovid speaks like a heroic representative of the counterculture of the nineteen-seventies:

The emperor has created his age. It is coterminous with his, and has its existence in the lives and loves of his subjects. It is solemn, orderly, monumental, dull. It exists in the eulogies that are made for him (to which I decline to contribute) and in marble that will last forever.

I too have created an age. It is gay, anarchic, ephemeral and it is fun. He hates me for it.

But in the shadow of a portico dedicated by his sister to her faithful husband, someone tonight is being fucked; because in a poem once I made it happen, and made that particular act, in that particular place, a gesture of

public defiance. Each night now Augustus thinks of it and bites his thumb. There are places closer than the Black Sea where the emperor's power stops. The portico of Marcellus is one of them.⁴

Overstatement, vulgarity ("someone tonight is being fucked"), and romancing: can we really think that this postmodern narrator (Anglo-Lebanese by birth, whose work is published in Australia) has any contribution to make to the study of Ovid's poetry? This time it is not because he has written poems à clef ("palindromes" and "spoonerisms") that Ovid is banished, but because he has written the *Ars amatoria*. This question is still debated: if the *Ars amatoria* is merely the frivolous and worldly text that it is often seen as, the emperor's reaction is difficult to account for. Malouf seems to think that this frivolous and worldly text becomes subversive whenever it attaches itself to the monuments and symbols of Augustan order. We shall come back to the subject of monuments in chapter 1, but for the moment I shall only make a very general remark: this novel about Ovid's exile shows up a contradiction in current views of the relationship between Ovid's poetry and the regime. What Ovid writes on the themes of private life and of sex tends to be seen only in terms of frivolity, as a world apart from the austere preoccupations of Augustan politics. It is not even clear whether there is any possibility of real conflict between two types of discourse that are so immeasurably different. But this way of thinking, which is typical of literary historians, neglects an important *historical* fact: it is not Ovid, it is Augustus who has politicized the *amores* of the citizens of Rome. A regime that for the first time in Rome's history makes laws aimed at regulating even what should go on in the bedroom will naturally also leave itself open to contestation in the field of sexual behavior. Anyone who sets out with the idea that the *Ars amatoria* is a frivolous text, because it describes adulterous love affairs and sensual pleasures, runs the risk of not realizing the fundamental importance that the areas of morals and private life have for the new regime. We shall soon see that this point of view is not only suggested by Malouf's reading of the *Ars amatoria* but also by Ovid's own rereading of the *Ars amatoria* in one of his later works, *Tristia* 2.

But what audience is Ovid writing for? Carved on the rough stone columns of the "world's end" is a conclusion of the *Metamorphoses* in

4. Malouf 1978, 23.

which Augustus's praises are no longer legible.⁵ Tabucchi's Ovid dances for the Caesars, but is not appreciated. The Ovid of *An Imaginary Life* entrusts a message to the ice, hoping that it will last for more than a thousand years, by which time the Empire will have fallen, and anxiously asks us, his modern readers: "Have you heard of Ovid? Does anybody read me? Have I survived?" The (doubtful) final word of the *Metamorphoses*, *vivam*, has become a question to future readers: the answer is "Yes," if modern artists still continue to read their own personal story with the assistance of Ovid, poet and political victim, but there is one reservation—the Empire has not fallen, not completely. It is still a part of us and influences our readings of Ovid.

This book is a contribution to the field of studies concerning the relationship between political power and literature in the Augustan age, and the method I have chosen consists of a series of very close readings, alternated with some general considerations. In each case these readings start with questions of form and with close examination of the text, and from there make a gradual progress toward the meanings that the text implies. I do not think that this qualifies me to claim any sort of "scientific" neutrality. The history of classical studies has shown us that there is no objective, stable position from which to look at the past "from outside," and the best one can do is be aware of this—indeed, one can only be partly aware of it. This holds even more true if we intend to speak of Augustus. There is a line of continuity that unites this emperor with the language that our modern age uses to represent power and authority, and it is extremely difficult to say anything about him without taking a partial stance in the discussion.

But most difficult of all to trace is the thread uniting the points that are covered over by hostility to the regime, by *anti*-Augustan discourse. In a certain sense, Augustus is still the winner, because it is he who dictates the agenda. Many of our considerations on such important themes as authority, propaganda, consent, artists, and political power are already conditioned from the start by our diffuse but imperceptible assimilation of Augustan discourse. The implications of this not only affect our way of envisaging power and its voice, but they also have a profound influence on our alternative images, those of the anti-Augustan sphere that might come into sight. Our documentation, which is so rich con-

5. On Augustus as present and absent in the ending of *Metamorphoses*, see my essay, Barchiesi 1997.

cerning other aspects, is spectacularly poor when it is required to give us a concrete demonstration of what it meant to be “anti,” to be on the other side.

If we look at the literary texts that are defined (pause for thought . . .) as Augustan, the problem does not really lie in the lack of agreement between interpreters. In the discussion of authors like Virgil, Propertius, and Ovid, a certain polarization has shown itself to be inevitable. No critical authority has so far demonstrated that an Augustan reading, or an anti-Augustan reading, or any type of compromise between the two, is intrinsically better than any other, but this is only natural in literary studies. The real problem is that each different tendency in this debate has difficulty in recognizing and allowing for its own roots. The opposition in question, first of all, is far from neutral.⁶ On the one hand, the “Augustan” interpreters tend to claim that their position is objective and impartial, but this is open to objections: they would be far less complacent if, like their opponents, they had to wear a less neutral label, for example that of “*pro-Augustans*.” On the other hand, the use of a classification with the prefix *anti-* is inevitably an act of homage to the winner. I do not want to say that objectivity is absolutely impossible, but it is also true that it is not easy to draw a clear line between valid contributions and “extrascientific factors.”⁷

The “Augustan” interpretation of the *Aeneid* and of Horace’s lyric poems has a long history of compromise between classical studies and political power. But neither can the search for alternative approaches claim to be uncontaminated: the “anti-Augustan” Aeneas of many recent works of research is a reaction against, but not a departure from, this system of values. Does this picture of the winner as a sad victim of the dynamics of war constitute a reproach, an act of remorse, or perhaps a transposed reaffirmation of Augustan discourse? It depends whether one prefers to see poetry as the simple celebration of power or as a humanitarian mediation that makes this power acceptable by portraying it as anguished and aware of its own fallibility. The *Aeneid* is nearer to this

6. A point well made in Duncan Kennedy’s penetrating deconstruction of the polarity (Kennedy 1992), although I am convinced that the field has more of a future than Kennedy himself allows us to foresee, precisely thanks to generous contributions like the one he offers.

7. The study of Römische Wertbegriffe is hard to disentangle from its origins in German Nationalism, and Syme’s Augustus is still fascinating after the disappearance of his nurturing enemy, Fascist classicism (my choice of words implies that I am not the one who can claim to be unbiased and neutral).

second version, but it would be rash to call this an “anti-Augustan” reading.

The problems do not become any easier when Augustan discourse forces the “private” genres of Roman poetry to respond to a political questionnaire. The interpreter who is working on texts, such as Horace’s *Satires* and *Epistles* and much of Propertius and Ovid, that profess themselves to be outside the celebratory and official arena soon is confronted by a difficult parting of the ways. A political interpretation of these texts often means ignoring their claims to independence and impoverishing their meaning. Yet one cannot be satisfied with the results of a complete separation between politics and aesthetics. We have just seen this paradox illustrated by the *Ars amatoria*: the text hedges itself round in a frivolous and private space of its own (an *Ars* for art’s sake), but the Julian laws have a different story to tell.

Having traced this brief outline of the problem facing me, I could stop here: the instruments I intend to adopt in my reading of the poetic text will be defined during the course of the book, and the relationship between politics and poetics—for the very reason that it is an open question and not an established datum—will be the central argument of my first chapter. However, I should like to add a few words about ways of interpreting Augustan culture. This is a vast and fascinating field, in which the interpreter can no longer be guided by the codified rules of literary hermeneutics. Every scholar who studies a poetic text must select reference points, and in doing so, he or she more or less consciously, but inevitably, “constructs” a unique model of Augustan culture, and this model is then used as the touchstone of comparison and contrast for analysis of the poem. It is clear that such models can differ considerably one from another, depending on the presuppositions that underlie them: “Augustan-ness” can, for example, be seen as something more like a political party, or a propagandistic message, or a world vision (and thus an ideology), or the label used for an individual character, the historical person Octavian Augustus with his own ideas and mentality. It can be a variable combination of all these elements, a combination to which the perceptions gathered from the literary texts add their contribution; and then, by a circular path, those same texts will be compared with the Augustan model that they have helped to construct. In short, scholars who study the subject of “Augustus and the poets” are generally highly aware of the ambiguities, tensions, and nuances that belong to poetic discourse; but they are not sufficiently aware of the ambiguities, tensions,

and nuances that belong to the category "Augustus."⁸ They are often sensitive to the shifts and contradictions of meaning that the poetic text suggests by means of the active collaboration of its readers, but just as often they are immovable and overconfident in their way of representing the Augustan context. What we ought to keep in mind, on the contrary, is that if it is true of a poetic text that it can only construct its own meaning through a sort of negotiation with its addressees, then this characteristic is not exclusively reserved to literature. Anyone who thinks that he or she can pin down poetic texts so that they will function as captions for new figurative or ideological pictures is guilty of oversimplification; but it is equally mistaken to think that it is only poetry that is conflictual, polysemic, and open to contradictory elements. We must try to widen our vision of what we are in the habit of calling Augustan ideology, Augustan propaganda.

It seems to me that many of the most important historical contributions made in recent years have a common orientation, which runs through the specialized disciplines of archaeology, numismatics, epigraphy, religious history, and the social and political history of the Augustan age. Among the advances made in these fields, one can make out a shared focus of interest, which can be defined as "the monopoly of the symbolic dimension," and a certain way of reading Augustan culture, which sees it ever more as "discourse."

What is brought into ever clearer focus by the progress in studies of this kind is not so much the constitutional nature and the ideal program of the new regime as its development as an all-embracing discourse, which is able to take over and transform to its own ends the resources of the collective imagination. This transformation is at its most radical just when it claims, through its propaganda, to be restoring and renewing continuity with the past. This way of seeing the problem is a turning point that must not be undervalued. A long tradition of studies (energetically opposed by Syme, from yet another viewpoint) had concentrated the work of analysis on the delicate transitions of constitutional engineering that regulate the nature of Augustan power. Nuances, often subtle, in the system of titles and institutional relations were considered to be of decisive importance, but meanwhile the debate always foundered on the rocks of the same dilemma. Is Augustus a conservative or a revolutionary, is the regime a more or less disguised monarchy or a

8. The crucial point is made with great clarity by Phillips 1983.

mixed system, and how much value does the republican component still have? Certain misunderstandings have lain heavily on the question for a long time. Augustus's relationship with the old republican order is not to be seen in terms of nostalgia, of traditionalism, nor even of pure and simple ideology. His continuance of the old institutions has its own functional logic and is not a mere facade. This is not because Augustus is a conservative (in this case his personal preferences do not come into the question); it is rather that such continuity is important to him for the very reason that his new power is founded on the very inadequacy and the ungovernability of the old institutions. Thus by keeping them alive the prince is not simply paying lip service to the personalities of the ancien régime and offering them a residual compromise. The function of this policy of preservation, the so-called Augustan restoration, is the paradoxical one of keeping alive structures that produce a continual state of crisis, and this in its turn gives increasingly more strength to the only authority that is capable of governing it. It is therefore right that attention should be shifted away from constitutional technicalities and "high-level" politics toward the use of symbols and collective representations. A number of recent discoveries, or revisions, make this picture much more lively than it was in the past. There has been such a great increase in our documentation on the ruler cult that the conventional (ideologized) division between West and East is no longer valid: throughout the Empire one unified campaign, even if it adapts itself to different languages and cultures and uses varying instruments and degrees, promotes the message of the prince's status between the human and the divine. Material that has long been familiar, especially coins and calendars, suggests new ideas when considered systematically, and once again, the central finding that emerges is the absolute monopoly held by the prince, who makes an innovatory use of the coinage and the calendar as instruments to promote his own image. His handling of the town planning of Rome opens up similar perspectives, and can thus be integrated in the wider subject of Augustan discourse. The exciting discovery of the *Horologium Augusti* in the Campus Martius has revealed an architectural unit connecting the *Ara Pacis* with an obelisk used as the hand of a sundial, supported by a project that confiscates the public means of measuring time to make it subservient to the imperial horoscope. The shadow of this gigantic obelisk-sundial pointed dramatically to two great anniversaries connected with universal peace, the prince's birthday at the autumnal equinox and the entry of the sun into his zodiacal sign (Capricorn—still a somewhat mysterious choice for us) at the winter solstice.

Less spectacular,⁹ but profoundly significant, is the excavation that has brought to light the architectural link between Augustus's house on the Palatine (with its internal shrine of Vesta) and the nearby temple of Apollo. Uniting the two buildings, this structure is the clearest imaginable evidence for the religious discourse that puts the prince into direct communication with the gods and appropriates the practice of the official cults, placing them under his control. The plan of the Augustan Forum (reexamined in Paul Zanker's important book) has made it possible for us to reconstruct a rich and all-embracing propagandistic discourse from stylemes and figurative quotations. We are thus in an excellent position to examine Augustan poetry against the background of a much vaster and more complex communicative fabric, and we can no longer think (if this ever seemed probable) that the prince's voice was prevalently transmitted through the *Roman Odes* or through Aeneas's shield. . . .

This new atmosphere offers a stimulating challenge to interpreters of the period's literature. In fact it has widened our range of connections. We are less concerned with personal dialogues, with questions of sincerity and agreement, with literature used to speak for the regime, with the problematic tension between commitment and autonomy in art, and we are more interested in the interconnection between political power and the use of symbols, where literature is just one means of communication among many others. But this does not in any way simplify the work of interpreting literary data; it only increases the interpreter's responsibilities. Let us consider Paul Zanker's systematic reconstruction of Augustan figurative culture. Here we are presented with a dominant discourse that in the course of its development selects and dictates the prevalent styles, while at its margins there are belts of taste that reflect individual choice and appreciation: but these private "consumers" of art also fall progressively into line. In a comparatively short time, the transmission of figurative messages is extended to influence individual choice in household decoration, furnishing, and objects. Augustan poetry is used as a support, and often as a caption, to this map of "power through images."

But poetry, compared to other communicative media used in Augustan society, has greater potential for conflict and dissent, as well as less

9. And more trustworthy, perhaps: Buechner's reconstruction of the sundial has been recently challenged by scientists, and I can only recommend that his results be viewed skeptically.

stability. It is in the literary documents that the picture of universal and extended consensus offered by historical studies can find its limits—that is, if we agree to look at them from a problematizing point of view. Public and collective images and symbols of identity are not everything: no society (and even less such an advanced one) is perfectly uniform, no literary readership is bound to conform. Propaganda is not only a circular verification of the consensus that it is intended to bring about by exploiting ideas and language codes that are already widely used: it is also violently biased, while claiming to be the expression of values that are impartial, universal, and natural. The key concepts of Augustan discourse cannot be used as proof that all Romans always thought along these lines and that the audience would not have understood hostile versions or ironical revisions of them.

Stability, concord, and centralization: to achieve these ends the regime draws and displays the first total map of the Empire, has Rome's history rewritten with Augustus's name written into it, has the calendar redesigned with Augustus once more included in it, gives a new name both to the prince and to the months, makes interpolations in the traditional prayers, occupies the city's spaces with images that never grow old, makes a public inscription of the triumphal *Fasti* and thus seals them for ever, shuts up the temple of Janus, requisitions the shadow of the sundial, and opens a *saeculum*. All aspects of Roman life are involved: sacrifices, religious cults, horoscopes, processions, coins, pottery, funerals, games, inaugurations, comets, forbidden sexual acts, censuses, time-keepers, birthdays, control over the firemen, arches, statues, restorations, demolitions, libraries, and obliterations.¹⁰ The more closely woven our discursive fabric becomes, the greater is our need for poetry, whose signifiers are so difficult to pin down.

10. I cannot offer a systematic bibliography here; I list some of the historical works which influence my views of Augustanism in Barchiesi 1992, 49–50.

PART ONE

Arma virumque in the Mirror of the Black Sea

*(Featuring Observations on
Politics and Poetry)*

What can life really have been like in Tomi? According to Ovid the place was swarming with barbarians in full battle array: Getan or Sarmatian warriors on horseback, clad in shaggy furs and bristling with arms—spears, swords, and especially bows and quivers, arrows and poisoned darts. He saw arms ready to strike all the time and wherever he looked: not only in the disputed border areas but also in the town itself, up and down the very streets of this ancient Greek colony. Mounted archers in the town center of Tomi? There must have been some consideration of public safety, in the name either of imperial authority, or at least of the traditions of life in the colonies. Can we believe Ovid? The greatest historian of the Augustan age (who was, among other things, also an authority on colonial life) counters brusquely: “It will not with safety be believed that any of the Greek cities on the shore of Pontus tolerated the presence of armed natives within their walls.”¹ But for Ovid the Black Sea means arms everywhere. The exaggeration in itself is understandable: in Rome it was by no means normal to bump into armed men in the city streets, and it must have come as a shock to Ovid. But he is not writing a personal diary: he is writing for the readers of Roman poetry, and that is what interests us here.²

1. Syme 1978, 164 (cf. also 16).

2. The problem of Ovid’s Pontic ethnography should be approached with an eye on the theory of “possible worlds” and its literary uses: there are materials and observations, already arranged in a correct perspective, in Claassen 1990.

This overwhelming presence of arms is a new backdrop for Ovid's poetry. Out of the enormous repertory of wars in the *Tristia* and the *Ex Ponto*, a few familiar fragments emerge (*Trist.* 4.10.111, 5.3.11): *hic ego, finitimis quamvis circumsoner armis*;³ *nunc procul a patria Geticis circumsonor armis*. The source here is the words of Evander, a likable king who was exiled in a much more agreeable spot (*Verg. Aen.* 8.474, *hinc Rutulus premit et murum circumsonat armis*).

The barbarian arms are kindly supplied by Virgil's epic, and this introduces us to the account of an obsession which is literary rather than figurative or ethnological. *Arma virumque* offers a key to a new reading of Ovid's entire poetical biography: it is he, in fact, not Aeneas, who is the *vir* of our part title.

"ARMA" AND LITERARY GENRES

It is a good general rule (and one that we have already broken) to begin at the beginning. A few years earlier, a youthful writer had published his first book of poetry, and had the cheek to open it exactly like Virgil: *arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam*.

The *Amores* begin with a marked inversion.⁴ The usual habit among Augustan poets was to promise or postpone the composition of epic to a future date, if and when they might be capable of it: this beginner who is making his poetic debut with a book of love elegies boldly declares that before this he was an epic poet, in full command of his art. The title of this book of elegies, the referential term *Amores*, is flanked by a single title word just like the one that identifies the *Aeneid*, a title word which is immediately deflated: *arma vs amores*.⁵

Virgil did all he could to garner a monopoly on this *incipit*. The phrase *arma virumque* is the calculated result of a cross between the *Iliad* ("war") and the *Odyssey* ("the man"). *Arma* contrasts the new poem with the peace of the pastoral and georgic world. *Arma virum*, "the he-

3. The hostile echo surrounding *ego* is reverberated in the multiple *s* sounds and in the threefold final-*is*.

4. *Amores* 1.1 is an intensely studied text, and Labate's analysis (1984, 17–20) would be hard to improve on: therefore my comments on this fundamental poem will be rather brief.

5. Lucan, a young poet as independent as the young Ovid of *Amores* 1.1, makes a step further and composes a work where the *incipit* is not (as in Ovid) undermined; on the contrary, he attacks and displaces the title under whose warrant the work is presented to the reader: *Bella . . . plus quam civilia* instantly corrects and surpasses *Bellum civile*. The poet (as Henderson 1987 has shown) wages war on himself, and the *Bellum civile* is an act of civil war.

roes' arms," is a widespread epic tag, going back perhaps to Ennius, and is often used in the battle scenes of the *Aeneid*.⁶ To make this doubly clear, the scene of the war in Latium introduces an epic singer, whose song is of *equos atque arma virum pugnascque* (*Aen.* 9.777).⁷ This bard dies in battle, in a manner that is almost overly appropriate to the subject matter of his song: a cruel touch of irony, considering that the author of *arma virumque* is far from warlike himself, and will not be identified with the wars he is singing of. We can also mention an even more important predecessor, no less important than Homer, who is written into the text of the *Aeneid*. Aeneas too is after all a poet: the *Aeneid* quotes the entire corpus of his production, somewhat scanty, but neatly expressed in the measure of a hexameter (*Aen.* 3.288): *Aeneas haec de Danais victoribus arma*.

Aeneas says that he composed this line for a votive shield. The hexameter is an appropriate verse form for a heroic epigraph. The line, destined for a piece of armor, contains in itself the *incipit* of the *Aeneid*: not only *arma* but also the name of the *vir* who is its protagonist. In fact the words appear (3.286) to have been engraved straight onto the shield, thus constituting a perfect union between signifier and signified: *arma* on *arma*, hexameter, celebration of victories and defeats—that is, epos itself.⁸

Ovid did what he could to advertise his theft. A hexameter from the *Amores* in praise of Virgil shows that the *Aeneid* can be cited by means of the mere word *arma* (1.15.25): *Tityrus et fruges Aeneiaque arma legentur*.

Just one word for the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* (in the case of the *Eclogues* the exact *incipit* is also maintained), and two for the *Aeneid*, in perfect symmetry because the adjective *Aeneia* comes from the first line of the second sestet (7.1, *Aeneia nutrix*).⁹ After returning the arms to Virgil, the love poet explicitly dissociates himself from them (3.2.49): *Plaude tuo Marti, miles. Nos odimus arma*.¹⁰

This combination is already present in Propertius; after introducing

6. Conte 1984, 48–9; Traina 1989, 118, notes that *virum* would have been metrically impossible as a beginning.

7. It is probably significant that his name, Cretheus, is related to Cretheis, Homer's mother according to some genealogies of the poet accepted by the Homeric *Vitae* (for other comments see Barchiesi 1995).

8. The shield is left at Actium, of all possible places: so the difficult celebration of a vanquished Aeneas is contrasted with the ultimate triumph of Augustus.

9. As McKeown 1989 (ad loc.) has seen.

10. Stahl 1985 has useful material on elegy, love, and war.

Aeneas's *arma* (2.34.63), he opens two consecutive elegies with the words *ARMA DEUS CAESAR . . . meditatur* (3.4.1) and *PACIS AMOR DEUS EST, pacem veneramur amantes* (3.5.1).

The next step is the *Ars amatoria*. At the end of the second book an unexpected continuation is announced. Ovid has offered his services to the male sex, but now women, too, represented by the Amazons, come out on the warpath (2.743 ff.; 3.1 ff.). The addition of a third book is announced on a note that is by now familiar—*arma . . . supersunt*—and the continuation of the *Ars a(r)mandi* suggests that even the greatest of all epic poems could have had a parallel alternative continuation: after the Greek victory, the Amazons invade the scene:

"Ὡς οἱ γ' ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἑκτορος ἥλθε δ' Ἀμαζών.¹¹

After opening two books of elegies with the word "arms," Ovid starts work on an epic poem in which arms have a very particular destiny. In the *Metamorphoses* humanity learns to use them in the accursed Iron Age (1.143): *sanguineaue manu crepitantia concutit arma*. The second appearance of *arma* in the poem is more typical, because it involves a reference to *Amores* 1.1, the poem in which elegy outshines the arms of epics. Apollo exults in his own successful feat of arms, and warns Cupid not to make an improper use of them (*Met.* 1.456): "*quid*" *que* "*tibi, lascive puer, cum fortibus armis?*"

We are thus reminded that the most sublime of all epic poems opens with a terrifying image of Apollo armed with bow and arrows (*Iliad* 1.44–52). Apollo's warning (and he is also the god of poetry) would not be out of place in the mouth of a literary critic, concerned that the rules and the decorum of literary genres should be observed.¹² What has Cupid got to do with the heroic arms of a great poem in hexameters? The rest of the episode demonstrates with mathematical clarity that elegy has invaded the field of epic, and that the arms of Love are far more powerful than those of heroic literature. Later Ovid sets himself the task of rewriting the *Iliad*, cutting down the dueling scenes and in their place giving ample space to verbal combat. Ajax and Ulysses use the arms of eloquence to fight for possession of the most famous arms in the history of Western epic, the panoply of Achilles. Ulysses taunts Ajax with his in-

11. An allusion to a "cyclic" (?) variant for the last line of the *Iliad* (see *schol. Hom. Il.* 24.804, p. 642 Erbse) would not be amiss in a poem which opens with a conspicuous Homeric quote (as seen by Citroni 1984 in 1.3–8). The scholion on *Iliad* 24.804 is of course problematic (see e.g. Kopff 1981, 931; Davies 1988, 48).

12. The intertext of the *Amores* in this episode is well analyzed by Nicoll 1980.

tellectual incompetence: *postulat ut capiat, quae non intellegit, arma* (13.295, "he asks for armor which he cannot appreciate").

The shield of Achilles, as Homer describes it, is a complex and difficult text: if Ajax won it, he would be in the situation of Virgil's Aeneas,¹³ who has to fight with a shield whose code of symbols and references he is unable to understand: *clipei non enarrabile textum . . . miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet* (Aen. 8.625, 730). But Ajax is a perfect epic hero, and his is the only voice in the *Metamorphoses* to have the legitimate right to make use of the significant syntagma *arma viri* (13.121): *arma viri fortis medios mittantur in hostes*. And Ulysses' words show themselves mightier than warlike valor in the final epigram (13.383): *fortisque viri tulit arma disertus* ("an eloquent man took the arms of a brave").

The poem contains at least one writer able to produce examples of sublime poetry, Orpheus; but Orpheus, for quite understandable personal reasons, has turned to light love poetry and makes only a brief reference to his past as a poet of grandiose epic (10.149–52: "I already composed a Gigantomachy, in a much grander vein, but now . . ."): this poetical decline is in evident agreement with the opening gambit of *Amores* 1.1.

The *Fasti* is the Augustan poem that both dissociates itself most completely from *arma* and accounts for this dissociation and dislike most exhaustively.¹⁴ As this poem will be before our eyes throughout this inquiry, a few brief references can be sufficient for the moment. The program of the *Fasti*—the festivities of the Roman year—contains in itself the refusal to sing of arms (1.13): *Caesaris arma canant alii; nos Caesaris aras* ("it is for others to sing about the arms of the Caesars; for me, to sing about their altars").

Mars, god of war and of epic poetry, is invited to lay down his arms before entering the new poem (3.1 ff.; below, part II, chapter 1). The occasions on which the use of arms appears to be inevitable (and the history of Rome contains a great number of them) are often subjected to a process of postponement and frustrated expectations. The god Mars is continually under attack in this view of militarism. The reader's expectations of war—and of epic—are concentrated around him and his words. When Romulus needs women for his people, Mars gives him this lapidary advice (3.198): *quod petis arma dabunt*.

13. The joke on Virgil is perceived by Hardie 1985, 17 n. 40.

14. Hinds 1992 is essential on this and other aspects of the poem.

Actually, as everyone knows, Romulus will resort to cunning, preferring to play a trick (and a somewhat sacrilegious one) rather than face his opponents in battle. And when the rape of the Sabines mobilizes *arma* and the armies are drawn up in arms one against the other, it is the unarmed women and children who will win the battle, preventing a fratricidal massacre: *tela viris animique cadunt, gladiisque remotis . . . scutoque nepotem / fert avus: hic scuti dulcior usus erat* (3.225–28: “the men dropped their weapons and their anger; swords were sheathed . . . each grandfather carried a son on his shield—a sweeter use for a shield”).¹⁵ According to Ovid it is because of this feminine triumph over arms that the calends of March, the first day of Mars’s own month, is a feast day for married women. After his militaristic approach has met with this failure, the god of war reappears in the sixth book, when the Romans are in a desperate strategic position, under siege from the Gallic hordes. The god’s advice is as expected, and is couched in appropriately old-fashioned language (6.371–72): *arma capessant, / et si non poterunt exsuperare, cadant!* (“Let them take up arms, and if they can’t prevail, let them fall!”).

The alternative “triumph or death,” however, is seen as an oversimplification. Jove offers wiser advice: he tells the Romans to throw bread rolls down onto the besiegers. Using a lofty epic style, Ovid describes the effects of a bombardment which is absolutely unique in the history of epic (6.392: *iacta super galeas et scuta longa sonant*; “what they threw clanged on helmets and long shields”): convinced that the Romans are well stocked with provisions, the Gauls raise the siege, and victory is achieved not in the name of Mars but in that of Jove the Miller (6.394, *Pistori . . . Iovi*).

There are naturally certain episodes where it would seem impossible to avoid war and the literary code that accompanies it. The *Fasti* is also, indirectly, a history of Rome and Augustus, and it is difficult to imagine such a history without any battles. But the poet works patiently to nullify such moments. One of the first aetiological accounts in the poem is entrusted to the voice of Janus, the god who supervises both Peace and War.¹⁶ The story offers a rather martial picture, and Janus seems to have

15. A shield had been used to rock an infant Heracles (Theocr. *Id.* 24.4–10), but for the Alexandrian poet the motif creates a nexus between the confined reality of the epyllion and the expectation of great epic deeds; here the function is exactly the opposite, a descending dynamics.

16. More on Janus’s tales in Hardie 1991; Barchiesi 1991, 15–16. Heinze 1960 [1919], 333, is still important.

embarked on a proper epic lay: *Oebalii rettulit arma Tati* (1.260). But the following line informs us that this is the story of the Vestal Tarpeia, the traitress who opened the gate to the enemies, the Sabines who were besieging Rome: *utque levis custos, armillis capta, Sabinos / . . . duxerit* (1.261–62, “he related Sabine Tatius’s siege of Rome and how the fickle guard was bribed with bracelets to show the Sabines the route . . .”). *Levis* as she is, Tarpeia is unsuited to the *gravitas* of an epic poem, and what interests her most is not Tatius’s *arma* but his *armillae*, the valuable bracelets that he uses to bribe the frivolous girl: *armillae* behaves almost as if it were a diminutive of the word *arma*, canceling it out or reducing it to the dimensions of elegy. However, the story continues, and we expect a battle to be narrated: this story also figures in the epic *Metamorphoses* and comes to a climax in a welter of Roman and Sabine blood. But in the *Fasti* the god Janus intervenes in a perfectly bloodless way: his sulphur springs gush with boiling water and close the road to the Forum to the Sabine invaders—a hot shower rather than a bloodbath.

What I am moving toward is a point where *arma* and epic poetry (with all that this implies in Augustus’s Rome) merge into one—exactly as they do in the proem to the *Aeneid*, *arma virumque*. A final example from the *Fasti* can illustrate this interrelation. The poem gives some room to narrative themes suitable for epic poetry, and an excellent example of this is the long story of Anna (3.545–656), which has epic aspects both in its lengthy narration and, more important, because at first sight it appears to be a continuation, completion, and replica of the *Aeneid*. In its general sense, this operation of reworking is agreed on by most scholars.¹⁷ Ovid is elaborating on Virgil’s intertext in order to propose a “mini-*Aeneid*,” cut down in size, antiheroic and elegiac. The story has a heroine and not a hero. This heroine bids farewell to the ashes of Dido,¹⁸ sails away from Carthage, and meets Aeneas where Virgil left him. The names of the two characters give rise to curious assonances (cf. 3.607: *dum secum AENEAS “ANNA EST” exclamat Achates*; “while Aeneas was thinking to himself, Achates shouted, ‘It’s Anna!’”), and both will vanish into the same river (becoming, respectively, a *deus*

17. On the literary genealogy of Anna’s story, Littlewood 1980; McKeown 1984; Porte 1985a, 142–50. For a different perspective on this narrative development of the *ides* of March, see below, part II, chapter 3.

18. *Cineres ter ad ora relatos / pressit, et est illis visa subesse soror* (3.563–64): the elegiac shudder recants the words of her Epicurean advice to Dido in *Aen.* 4.34 (*id cinerem aut manis credis curare sepultos*), words that had encouraged Dido’s downfall in the Virgilian model.

indiges and a nymph of the river Numicius). Like Aeneas, Anna must first go through her *errores*, though on a smaller scale. One of her adventures is a period spent as the guest of Battus, the hospitable king of the island of Malta. The island is small but welcoming: *Haec* (says Battus to Anna) *tellus, quantulacumque, tua est* (3.572: “this land, tiny as it is, is yours”). But this small-scale and peace-loving king is unable to protect Anna from a threatened war (574, *magnas Pygmalionis opes*): *Frater adest, belloque petit. Rex arma perosus / “Nos sumus imbelles: tu fuge sospes” ait* (577–78: “Her brother threatened to attack. Detesting warfare, the king told Anna, ‘We are not warlike; you flee to safety’”).

Apparently this good king expresses himself only in pentameters, never in hexameters. The introduction of Battus into the story of Anna is, as far as we know, an innovation of Ovid’s: the value of the episode lies above all in its idyllic and pacifist climate, so consonant with the unarmed world of the *Fasti*, and in its reduction of scale in comparison with the armed adventures of the epic Aeneas. But this Battus is not a complete stranger to us; in the archaic Greek world his fame was connected above all with the foundation of Cyrene and with the curious double meaning of his name—we are told that it means “king” in Libyan, but the Greek word indicates a speech defect (*Battos*, “stammerer”—it is comical to imagine him getting his tongue around a word like *quantulacumque*). But in the Alexandrian-Roman world, the basis of Battus’s reputation seems to be more literary than historical.¹⁹ Battus is the progenitor of that poet Callimachus (son of another Battus) who was canonized in Rome as the “number one” of the elegiac genre (*princeps elegiae*, Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.58) and was regularly referred to as *Battiades* by his Latin-speaking pupils. Callimachus pays elegant homage to the founder of his city and of his race in his most programmatic hymn (to Apollo: *Hymn.* 2.65): Apollo guided Battus to the new city “with the fecund soil” (fertile just as Malta is, according to Ovid, 3.567).

Ovid seems to be suggesting that Callimachus owes something more to Battus than just heraldic prestige. Callimachus had rejected the “deeds of kings”: martial themes and the epic poetry of military achievements. Battus, “king” without “deeds,” is portrayed as the worthy forefather of the poet whom the *Fasti* regards as a model.²⁰ He is modest and loves

19. See also Barchiesi 1995 for the details.

20. In the epigram for his father (*A.P.* 7.525), Callimachus celebrates himself, a great poet, and his grandfather, “leader of our country’s arms” (3–4). Perhaps the celebration

small things, unwarlike and hates arms. These are all qualities that Ovid, as a “pure” elegiac poet, had theoretically enumerated in the *Amores*, in conformance with Callimachean poetics, or rather making use of Callimachean poetics: *quantulacumque estis, vox ego magna voco* (the poet and his land, *Am.* 3.15.14); *imbelles elegi . . . valete* (the poet bids farewell to his light poetry, 3.15.19); *nos odimus arma* (the love poet’s choice of life, 3.2.49). With truly Callimachean brevity, the king of Malta uses very few words (*quantulacumque . . . arma perosus . . . imbelles*) to show how a king who hates war can beget a poet who will teach others not to sing of *arma* and will indicate poetic alternatives to warlike epic.²¹ It is these programmatic choices, rather than aesthetic ones, that inspire Ovid’s rewriting of the *Aeneid* in the episode of Anna, where he offers an example of a possible transposition of the *Aeneid* into the elegiac mode: this variation on the epos is nothing less than a project to demilitarize high Augustan poetry.

An unobtrusive line of coherence links all these moves with the far-off poem to the *Amores*. In his protest against Cupid’s invasion of his poetic territory, Ovid posed the questions, “Could Venus ever appropriate Minerva’s *arma*?” and “Who could make Mars play the Aonian lyre?”—and now the *Fasti* presents an attempt both to requalify Venus and to disarm Mars (we shall discuss this in part II, chapter 1). The reader of *Amores* 1.1 could well have thought he was about to read a poem in hexameters, *Arma gravi numero violentaque bella . . .*; or at least an attempt at a poem in hexameters, . . . *parabam / edere, materia . . .*; up to the moment in which the second line suffers from shortness of breath and reveals itself to be a pentameter—just when we are reading a word that in the language of literary criticism ought to indicate the perfect match between subject matter and metrical form: *conveniente modis*.

The *Fasti* shows that the distich of love poetry can take possession of epic material and mischievously tease its reader until he is no longer quite sure where—in what sector of regular literature—he has ended up.

includes a reference to the name shared by the two, Kalli-machos: for the Roman poets, who normally identify Callimachus as the model of the disarmed poet, there could be irony in the juxtaposition. The archetype of the warlike poets, Ennius, receives, perhaps by contrast, a suitable ancestor, a war leader (see Barchiesi 1995).

21. It is useful to remember that those effects are perceived in the context of Roman culture, and are only partially coincident with our modern perception of Callimachus and his poetic priorities and choices.

POETRY AND DELATION

Our journey continues with the poetry of exile. At this point Ovid, as we already know, is a *vir* surrounded by *arma*. Destiny has placed him in the ideal position to test his relationship with high Augustan epic. More precisely, Augustus has placed the poet in a world that can be represented in terms of *arma* and that will have a destructive effect on his work. Even more precisely, Ovid is in a position to compose texts whose theme is the progressive destruction of their author at the hands of a hostile world, a world that can be represented—by the poet's choice—in terms of *arma* hostile to poetry.

Meanwhile epic poetry becomes the object of the poet's scrutiny in that long *Epistle to Augustus* that we generally refer to as *Tristia* 2. Ovid's expulsion from Rome is in itself a condemnation without trial of the *Ars amatoria*, and the poet puts before the emperor a detailed review of all the great Greek and Roman poems. Among these irreproachable works, these great epic poems which appear to be impervious to accusations of immorality, those of Lucretius and Ennius deserve an important place (*Trist.* 2.423 ff.):

Utque suo Martem cecinit gravis Ennius ore
 Ennius ingenio maximus arte rudis:
 explicat ut causas rapidi Lucretius ignis,
 casurumque triplex vaticinatur opus

Ennius, solemnly, with appropriate voice, was the singer of Mars; Ennius sublime for energy, artistically a primitive; Lucretius unfolds the causes of the devastating fire, and prophetizes a catastrophe for the threefold structure of the universe

In his poem Lucretius analyzed the causes of lightning (6.379 ff.) and announced the inevitable (according to his theory) dissolution of the universe (5.93–96). Ovid's voice also sings the praises of Lucretius in *Amores* 1.15.23–24: *Carmina sublimis tunc sunt peritura Lucreti / exitio terras cum dabit una dies* (“the songs of lofty Lucretius are destined to annihilation only when a single day will destroy the planet”),²² but a hint of malice peeps through: after all it is from Lucretius (in fierce disagreement with rival doctrines) that we learn how the world is destined

22. Based on Lucr. 5.95, *una dies dabit exitio*; the action dissolves the tripartite structure of the universe (93–94: *naturam triplicem, tria corpora . . . tris species . . . tria talia texta*), and *Trist.* 2.426 is a precise allusion.

to perish in a single day. His poem is eternal—until the moment, if we are to believe him, when everything will vanish, including the *De rerum natura*, which is no less perishable than the universe it represents. As everyone knows, poetry creates what it sings of, since it makes its subject matter real. Lucretius gained perennial fame—but if we are convinced by his argument, this fame is limited by the end of the world; otherwise, if he is wrong, it will be eternal. As for the causes of lightning (*rapidi . . . ignis*), it is a stern and noble theme: yet it is odd that Jove's thunderbolt should be the most frequent mythological image in the *Tristia*,²³ where Jove represents Augustus and the fire from heaven stands for imperial repression. Lucretius demonstrated that thunderbolts are not manufactured by Jove and have no punitive logic: has he therefore, in a way, contributed to the disarming of Augustus?

Interest in Ovid's comment on Ennius has been principally centered on the critical terminology he uses (*gravis, ingenium, ars, rudis*), but from our point of view the most interesting point is that the poem is identified with Mars. The choice of Mars is understandable: if it were possible for us to read the whole of the *Annales* from the beginning to the end, we would have no difficulty in agreeing that this is a poem "full of Mars," as was said of Aeschylus's *Seven against Thebes* (Ennius shares with Aeschylus a certain "primitive" image). Ovid has already insinuated elsewhere that there is a basic fellow feeling between Ennius and Mars. In two parallel passages (from the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*) in which Mars speaks directly, the god quotes verbatim a promise made to him by Jove at an earlier meeting. In recalling this promise Mars repeats, word for word, a complete line from the *Annales*: *unus erit quem tu tolles in caerula caeli* (*Met.* 14.814 = *Fasti* 2.487 = *Ann.* 65 V.²). In the passage from the *Metamorphoses* Mars claims to remember the words of this promise exactly as it was dictated to him: *nam memoro memorique animo tua dicta notavi* (14.813). Since Ovid is not in the habit, as a poet, of "borrowing" whole hexameters from his models, it would seem legitimate to presume that Mars, a god with no particular literary bent, knows "his" poem by heart.

But Ovid's strategy in *Tristia* 2.423–26 is not as linear as it seems. We are asked to accept as a premise the reputation of Lucretius and Ennius as poets above all moral censure, but we must then juxtapose this prem-

23. Kenney 1983, 148, mentions the impressive amount of thirty occurrences in the fifty elegies of the *Tristia* books. Bretzigheimer 1991, 43 ff., is a good study of ambivalences and implications in the model of "thundering" Augustus.

ise with a contrasting statement in *Tristia* 2.259–62, whose import is the exact opposite—“no works are above all suspicion”:

sumpserit Annales (nihil est hirsutius illis)
 facta sit unde parens Ilia, nempe leget.
 sumpserit “Aeneadum genetrix” ubi prima, requirit
 Aeneadum genetrix unde sit alma Venus.

If she starts reading the *Annales*—nothing can be more old-fashioned—she will unavoidably read how Ilia could become a mother; if she takes up Lucretius, she will immediately ask how can nurturing Venus be the mother of the Aeneadae.

A superficial reader (and that is just the kind of reader we need here) would have no grounds for suspicion: we are being shown, by an argument *ad absurdum*, that even Lucretius and Ennius can be seen as teachers of immorality if we make up our minds to read them in a certain way—the way that authority adopted in reading and censuring the *Ars amatoria*. Lucretius opened his poem with *Aeneadum genetrix*, the origin of Rome (and for Lucretius’s descendants the origin of the imperial family): a malicious glance backward in time shows us an act of adultery committed by Venus and Anchises. In the first book of his national poem Ennius recounted a scandalously erotic story about a vestal virgin, the mother of Romulus and Remus. Not only are the two poets open to censure, but their immoral stories affect the very origins of Rome and of the prince: Aeneas and Romulus.

A rather more attentive reader will take another look at *Tristia* 2.423–26: everything comes out right again, as Ennius and Lucretius are exonerated from any possible imputation. There is however a revealing hint: if we take the trouble to complete the elementary historical quiz of 2.260, “Who fathered Ilia’s children?” we obtain the answer “Mars”—that is, the selfsame god indicated later, in 2.423, as the irreproachable theme for the song of the *Annales*. Certainly, this time the juxtaposition between Mars and the *gravis Ennius* refers to solemn epic and not to erotic parentheses. But by a strange coincidence the language of line 423, *Martem cecinit gravis*, closely recalls a well-known line from the *Aeneid* (1.274), *MARTE GRAVIS geminam partu dabit Ilia prolem*, that is, once again, the censured theme from the parallel passage in *Tristia* 2.260.²⁴ In short, it is no easy matter to disentangle the epic from its opposite, that poetry of illicit *amours* which Ovid is accused of. If even a

24. The same diction is in the “light” narrative of the *Fasti* (3.23, *iacet ipsa gravis*).

text proverbial for severe simplicity like Ennius's *Annales* lends itself to a certain type of ambiguous reading, centered on the figure of "Mars," what are we to think about the *Ars amatoria*, which is at the center of the legal debate in *Tristia* 2? And above all, what are we to think about *Tristia* 2 itself, the setting of this debate? As a text it is so much concerned with problems of interpretation and the search for ambiguous readings that we might even think that it is inviting us to a nonunivocal reading of itself.

The literary and critical discussion in *Tristia* 2 is centered on the *Aeneid*. The poet Virgil has presented the prince with a standard to live up to, and his colleagues with a difficult challenge to take up: a poem which is modern in its quality and sensibility, but which is solemn and elevated in its content. The *Aeneid* is an implicit statement that Ovid has prostituted and abused his talent in the useless and wanton erotic lesson of the *Ars amatoria*—unless the comparison between the two poems shows itself capable of reversal (*Trist.* 2.533–36):

Sed tamen ille tuae felix Aeneidos auctor
 contulit in Tyrios arma virumque toros,
 nec legitur pars ulla magis de corpore toto
 quam non legitimo foedere iunctus amor.

Yet the celebrated author of your *Aeneid* has brought arms and the man into a Carthaginian bed, and no part from that body of work is more widely read than a story of unlawful sexual behavior.

The *Aeneid*, favored by the prince and appropriated by Augustan discourse (*tuae*), has made the fortune of its author, *felix* in opposition to Ovid, who is forced to write *tristia* on account of the *Ars amatoria*; but even the *Aeneid* contains a love story of a certain kind. The law of fitness, *decorum*, has been broken to allow epic to forfeit its purity and include an erotic theme from which Virgil gains success and popularity. This summary however does not give a sufficient account of various allusive effects and countereffects clustered around the words *arma virumque*.

The adjective *legitimo* is in marked assonance with the verb *legitur*, and this echo suggests (a great socioliterary truth) that only stories of illegitimate love affairs (the *Ars* has been incriminated for singing the praises of extramarital relationships) are pleasurably legible. *Tyrios toros*, a poetic and ironic plural, multiplies the Phoenician (luxurious, sensual, exotic) and Carthaginian (anti-Roman) loves of Aeneas, and by means of the hyperbaton makes them enclose *arma virumque*: now the part (*Aeneid* 4) contains the whole, and epic is subordinated to eros.

Corpore, referring to the literary work, heightens the sensual atmosphere. *Arma* can be interpreted in Latin also as a sexual euphemism. *Arma virumque* indicates the *Aeneid* by referring to its opening words and its epic theme, but it is also a circumstantial report to Augustus, almost a delation to him. The fact is that Aeneas has visited Dido's bedroom, and has (fatally) left his epic arms there (*Aen.* 4.495 ff.): *ARMA VIRi thalamo quae fixa reliquit . . . lectumque iugalem*. By taking his hero into Carthaginian bedchambers Virgil has nullified the Augustan hopes so clearly expressed by Propertius in the most famous advertisement for the *Aeneid* (2.34.63): *Qui nunc Aeneae Troiani SUSCITAT ARMA*.

Propertius had announced the *Aeneid* as a celebratory and Augustan poem, distinguishing it from pastoral poetry with its tender love stories (2.34.67–76 is a revisitation of the *Eclogues* in elegiac mode). In the same vein, Ovid quotes the Virgil of the *Eclogues* as the poet of light love affairs (2.537, *Phyllidis . . . Amaryllidis ignes*): this time, however, the *Aeneid* too is involved, and *contulit . . . in toros* has as its subtext Propertius's *suscitat*: the poet who according to the Augustan ideology "sets in motion" (in colloquial Latin also "wakes up, throws out of bed") the arms of Aeneas has shown that he can also "put them to bed." The announcement "greater than the *Iliad*" is so famous that it is easy to forget the original context: Propertius had framed his praise of heroic epic with a self-representation of the elegiac poet, lying on a soft couch after a night of pleasure. The exact phrase of *Tristia* 2.534 (*arma virumque toros*) is suggested by another programmatic passage from Propertius, in which the heroine of an illicit love story (a Vestal enamored of an enemy general) contrasts epic arms with the soft beds of elegy (4.4.62): *credite, vestra meus molliet arma torus*. Even the *Aeneid* has surrendered to elegy, and Augustus has not noticed.

If I intended to propose a new reading of *Tristia* 2, this could be the moment for a meditative pause.²⁵ For many years, and even now in the case of many readers, the poem has been interpreted as Ovid's apology to Augustus for the *Ars amatoria*. In fact, the *Tristia* takes the form of a long letter to the prince, and this should in itself be suggestive. Up to this moment there has been no parallel in all Ovid's work: the poet never addresses one particular contemporary, but always speaks to a wide general audience.²⁶ Besides, an epistolary text addressed to the prince is a

25. Barchiesi 1993 develops this reading of *Tristia* 2 and *Hor. Ep.* 2.1.

26. Citroni 1989.

rarity in Augustan poetry: the most obvious precedent that comes to mind is Horace's *Epistle to Augustus* (*Ep.* 2.1). This is a long lecture on the history of literature dedicated to Augustus: "dedicated" is a deliberately ambiguous term, because Augustus's role in Horace's discourse is shifting and subtly utilitarian. It certainly has a celebratory purpose, which is not only openly declared but also seen as a basic issue: "how to praise Augustus" is an important theme in this letter. But Horace's arguments are two-sided: on the one hand he is considering public utility and on the other private advantage. It is not Augustus to whom the lesson is directed, but the Romans: the term "Augustus" serves as a high-sounding indicator of the fact that this letter intends to treat literature as a question of national importance. The use of the prince's name (certainly not without his permission) is a way of giving added weight to Horace's ideas on literature: if traditional taste (the "reactionary" passion for ancient poets) is to be combated, the prince must be detached from the "conservative" position recommended by Augustan discourse in other aspects of social life. The structure of Horace's epistle is not dialectical, at least not with Augustus: its real interlocutor is literary society and its well-known faults.

In comparison with Horace's epistle,²⁷ *Tristia* 2 reads much more like a genuine letter: the most effective traps are the ones which use real bait. Augustus is constantly interpellated: after all, it is his pardon that must be obtained, and the time has come to speak to him face to face. This particular situation, which is costing Ovid a great deal personally, offers him the almost unrepeatable opportunity to give the prince a public lesson in literary history in front of all Rome. Horace's triangle is repeated, but the angles are inverted: Horace had invited Augustus to do something about his fellow citizens' cultural backwardness, but here the prince's ideas on poetry are held up to public inspection. In this context, the doctrinal element in *Tristia* 2, so very systematic and so unusually conventional, sounds like a provocation in itself. As a poet in disgrace,

27. The comparison is provoked by Ovid: at 231–40, in a delicate articulation of the apologetic discourse, he reuses the initial move of the Horatian epistle, the idea that the prince is too busy to listen to literary discussions—that is, in this context, to inspect the *Ars amatoria* with attention. Horace had framed in a few lines the concerns of Augustus (*Ep.* 2.1.1 ff., *cum tot sustineas et tanta negotia solus . . . moribus ornes / legibus emendes*). Ovid follows up: *urbs quoque te et legum lassat tutela tuarum / et morum, similes quos cupis esse tuis* (233–34). But whereas in Horace the prince is absorbed by the serious care of universal rule and moral reformation (*sustineas*), in Ovid the load seems a bit heavier. *Lassat tutela* may suggest that the Augustan moral legislation is losing impetus and needs a lot of toil to become effective—a point not unrelated to the field of the *Ars amatoria*.

Ovid has no right to talk about Augustus to the Romans: it is only by writing a letter to him that the poet can entice the prince to cross the boundaries of the text and to enter the territory of Ovidian discourse, thus turning him into a character in the *Tristia* and holding him up to the curiosity of the general, anonymous public. The script of *Tristia* 2 assigns the role of reader to this particular character, and in this way Ovid is able to construct a poem around the concepts “how to read poems” and, in particular, “how the prince reads literature.” Augustus’s ideas about literature, the ideas which, it is hinted, have led to the condemnation of the *Ars*, are shown to be inadequate. Those texts that appear most subservient to his ideological doctrine are in fact in revolt against him: the *Ars*, on the contrary, is loyal, or at least, is no more innocent or guilty than Ennius or Virgil is. Thus the dismissed poet is in a position to take on the role and share the experiences of that persona that was the cause of his own disgrace: in him the *delator*, that formidable instrument of imperial power, comes back into play to write careful reports on the dangers represented by Virgil, Euripides, and even Homer. The presence of this persona gives the text a particular fascination, as it goes to combine directly with the role suggested by Horace as “teacher of literary history”: an (un)masked police accusation.

Everything the poet says of and to the prince lends itself to a double interpretation, depending on the angle from which it is looked at. As we have seen, the text deals with ways in which poetry can be read and thus affirms, with regard to other texts and other authors, the possibility of subversive readings, a possibility that cannot easily be ruled out in the case of *Tristia* 2 itself; and it acts as a central hub for a reading of all Ovid’s poetry of exile.

Here is the “new” model of the temperate and merciful ruler proposed in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (1.2.121): *sed piger ad poenas princeps, ad praemia velox*. It has been brilliantly noted that Ovid has a Callimachean model in mind:²⁸ the Apollo of Delos holds his bow in his left hand and his lyre in his right, because he is a benign deity, reluctant to strike and unwilling to use his terrible powers. And it is no new idea that the prince should be merciful: this is one of his official attributes (as attested by the conventional Velleius, 2.126.4: *honor dignis paratissimus, poena in malos sera—sed aliqua*), and Ovid is simply reminding him of this by means of a learned allusion.

28. Lechi 1988 quotes Call. *Aitia* fr. 114 Pf.

Apart from the emperor, Ovid's other readers have no need of such elegant allusions: for them *piger ad poenas* has a far more obvious meaning. Augustus is *piger*, not because he is reluctant but because he is incredibly *slow* in his vengeance (that is, the opposite of *velox*): the *Ars amatoria*, as all Ovid's poetry of exile continually repeats, was not banned until nearly ten years after its publication—and it is for this very reason that the act of punishment appears arbitrary, persecutory, self-satisfied, and cruel in its delayed effect.

Even Ovid's apology for and retraction of the *Ars amatoria*, which is often seen as the functional nucleus of *Tristia* 2, can be read with the same double vision. Ovid starts from the hypothesis that Augustus has not had time to read the *Ars* (and if he hasn't, there won't be any more chances to do so, as the book has been suppressed, as everyone knows, by the prince's own orders). If he had by any chance read it, he would know that it is innocent (2.240): *nullum legisses crimen in Arte mea*.

It may actually be true that Augustus is not familiar with the *Ars*. In 2.61–62 Ovid informs him that the poem is full of complimentary quotations dedicated to him: *quid referam libros, illos quoque, crimina nostra / mille locis plenos nominis esse tui*. The reader who has a really accurate memory of the *Ars amatoria* will find this estimate of “a thousand” very odd. Augustus is almost absent from the poem—a wise decision, all told, considering its content. The only theme that these thousand estimated occurrences could be applied to is that of sex: *Venerem iungunt per mille figuras* (2.679, cf. *Am.* 3.14.24); *mille* (that is, sexual acts) *licet sumant, deperit inde nihil* (3.90); *mille modi Veneris* (3.787). However, if *Tristia* 2 is addressed to the real readers of the *Ars amatoria*, they will have no difficulty in remembering that 2.240 is not just a statement about the *Ars* but a verbatim quotation from the *Ars*: “‘*nullum*’ legisses ‘*crimen*’ in arte mea.” In order to back up his reply to the absent-minded prince, Ovid waits for a few lines and then inserts wholesale into *Tristia* 2.247–50 a four-line verbatim quotation from the proem to the *Ars* (1.31–34): “Far from here, slender *vittae*, symbol of chastity, far from here the matronal dress, longer than the ankle. We shall sing of safe love, no illicit affairs, and there will be no crime in my verse.” Generations of readers have always doubted whether the *Ars* makes a clear distinction between “safe sex” and adultery, but that is not what interests us here. The point is that if Augustus had had time to read it carefully, he would have found the words *nullum . . . crimen* in the *Ars*, the *carmen* that for him (punningly) is a *crimen*: *inque meo nullum carmine*

crimen erit (1.34). The argument goes round in a circle (and a serpentine one). This text cannot be incriminated, because it declares roundly, "I am not an incriminatable text."

Further on, Ovid makes a few tactical concessions: yes, the *Ars* could perhaps have acted as a provocation (naturally involuntary) to immoral behavior, but so do numerous other things, even public works like theaters, circuses, arcades, and temples. These are all works to which the emperor has dedicated personal attention and enormous sums of money in order to benefit the public (*Tristia* 2 was written during a rationing crisis):²⁹ it is a shame to think that they can give rise to immoral contacts and clandestine rendezvous. If the general effect of *Tristia* 2 was not that of a tendentious and authenticated rereading of the *Ars amatoria*, we could stop at this point. But the structure of the poem is an invitation to retroactive comparison: reading over Augustus's shoulder, its reader discovers thus that Ovid had recommended Augustus and Livia's monumental public works as suitable places for cruising. A case in point is the *porticus Octaviae*, a magnificent building housing the huge map of the inhabited world that the prince had put on display to illustrate to the citizens of Rome the achievements of his rule and his program of boundless imperial expansion.³⁰ The poet of the *Ars* saw these austere surroundings as an excellent vantage point for quite other varieties of conquest. It is an unwise move to speak of this argument again in *Tristia* 2 if the poem is addressed, as it claims to be, to the prince as the defender of public morals. If any readers have taken the *Ars* as an encouragement to vice, it is they who are guilty of an arbitrary act of folly, like anyone who looks everywhere for opportunities for sin; but Ovid's works are no more to blame than are the imperial monuments, circuses, theaters, arcades, and even temples. It would be no more senseless to pull them down than it had been to wipe out the *Ars amatoria* . . . as long as one can conveniently manage to forget that the use of these same circuses, theaters, and so on for libertine purposes had been suggested and encouraged by the *Ars amatoria* itself. . . .

Once again, it is not we but Ovid himself who is setting the agenda: if *Tristia* 2 is so obsessed with the double meanings and counterreadings generated by older texts, can we possibly be right in subjecting this text itself to a simplified, univocal reading? In speaking of the *Aeneid*, of

29. Wiedemann 1975.

30. For this interpretation see Moynihan 1985 (also, briefly, Beard 1987, 11 with nn. 37, 38); more generally, Nicolet 1989.

Homer, and of the Roman temples, Ovid constantly offers us a clear key for our reading: every work of art is open to deviant interpretations. The reader of *Tristia* 2 is invited to think that no duty-free areas exist: protestations of innocence, as we have seen, are not what they seem; and not even the panegyrics contained in *Tristia* 2 are to be taken completely at their face value. Let us look, for example, at the following passage in praise of the prince's consort (2.151–54):

Livia sic tecum sociales compleat annos
 quae, nisi te, nullo coniuge digna fuit,
 quae si non esset, caelebs te vita deceret,
 nullaue, cui posses esse maritus, erat.

Thus I hope Livia will complete with you the span of a married life: she who can be worthy of you, and of no other husband; if she had not existed, a bachelor's life would be suitable for you, and there would be no woman you could be married to.

There is an official set of formulae for wishing “long life to the prince and his relatives,” but one must not exaggerate the poets’ passivity: in these cases a certain creative contribution is expected of a poet, and it is the subtle variations on a fixed scheme that have a strong communicative value. To think of the panegyric as a sort of “grade zero” of literary communication is mistaken. Should we try to read this passage as a source of information, and not just as a repetition of formulae, various problems present themselves: (1) Augustus has been married three times, and Livia twice. Perhaps this difficulty can be overcome: dynastic marriages are exceptions to the traditional model of the woman as *univira*, and courtierly discourse can make anything acceptable (although this cuts both ways: it is this very “courtierly” label that makes its addressees particularly sensitive, so that they are even more liable to scrutinize the text for tendentious intonations and polyvalent messages. And “you could have married no one else” has always been a two-edged message). However, Horace’s lyric shows a greater degree of tact and elegance when it speaks of Livia as *unico gaudens / mulier marito* (*Carm.* 3.14.5). *Unico* cannot be reduced to an anagraphical datum: the point is that Augustus is certainly *unique*, for various reasons.³¹ (2) The wedding had caused a huge scandal, forty years earlier: Livia had come to Augustus’s house heavily and obviously pregnant by her previous husband. This is easy to play

31. Not unusually for Augustan poetry, the impression is that the language of praise gravitates on a repressed idea, something like “monarch” in this context—the Greek word that one could paraphrase with something like *imperator unicus* (cf. Catull. 29.11).

down: after all, it's old history now. (3) "Bachelor" in this period is not a neutral term (assuming that it ever is). In the moral climate of Augustan Rome, *caelebs* has connotations of uselessness and hedonistic egoism.³² If he had not met Livia, Augustus would have remained a bachelor for lack of any other possible wife: in his panegyric Ovid is descanting on the ordinary topos of "they were made for each other." The problem here (rather more tricky to overcome than the preceding ones) is that in that case—by reason of his own unpopular laws on marriage—Augustus would have had to pay a hefty fine. If the *Ars amatoria* has been judged guilty, can *Tristia* 2 possibly be innocent?

ARMA VIRUMQUE

We're beginning to understand why the Black Sea barbarians are not completely new figures. These sad conventional ghosts bear the arms characteristic of the type of poetry that Ovid has spent all his life avoiding. Here he is confronted with a scene of continual warfare that recreates the literary genre that he had rejected. The marriage between Augustus and high epic poetry had been consummated with great difficulty, in the midst of the contrasting testimonies and admissions of "light" poets: now the last of these poets has been uprooted from Rome and represents the barbarian scene in terms of an alien literary code.

A quick glance at any Ovidian concordance is enough to tell us that the Getans are *duri*, *hirsuti*, *inhumani*, *indomiti*, *truculenti*, *feri*, *intonsi*, *saevi*, *arcu fisi*, *pelliti*, *Marticolae*, *infesti*, *pharetrati*, *rigidi*, *crudi*, *stolidi*, *truces*, *feroces*, *squalidi* This is not just stock ethnography. The epithets that describe them (a stylistic institution of clearly epic origin) are rich in literary connotations. The barbarians are *pharetrati*, as was, ironically enough, Cupid in Ovid's youthful poetry. But all the other adjectives point toward a quite different field of associations. These tribes are *duri*, *hirsuti*, like ancient epic poetry, devotees of Mars, savage, enemies of *cultus*, like the enemies of Ovid's early poetic genre, carefree elegy. Once the target of Cupid, the poet is now exposed defenseless to the arrows of Getans, Scythians, and Sarmatians, whose warlike temperament puts weapons, arms and bows, in the place of books, the medium of poetic production (*Trist.* 3.14.38, *pro libris arcus et arma sonant*), and there is irony in the idea that Ovid might find here what he

32. Compare Nisbet and Hubbard 1970 on Hor. *Carm.* 2.15.4.

needs to create new poems: *at puto, si demens studium fatale retentem, / hic mihi praebeat carminis arma locus* (Trist. 5.12.51–52). Tomi can offer *arma* but not *carminis arma*. The threat represented by barbarian arms is paralleled by Ovid's linguistic isolation: *Threicio Scythicoque fere circumsonor ore* (Trist. 3.14.47) is in assonance with the phrase *circumsonor armis* (above, p. 00).

Paradoxically, the Getans have become the subject matter of a type of poetry that rejects them and that has always considered *arma* as an uncrossable boundary. But these *arma*, as we have seen, are also the price of writing celebratory poetry, the currency of the temptation to adopt Augustan discourse. These two dichotomies, between *arma* and Augustus, on the one hand, and the poetry of peace and of personal concerns, on the other, converge when at a critical moment of his career Ovid begins to write *Getan* poetry. It is almost incredible that he should take this linguistic step, when one considers the general attitude of Romans toward the study of barbarian languages.³³ At first the poet is bombarded with incomprehensible sounds, by which he is isolated; then he is tempted to adapt himself to barbarian culture; and finally he is absorbed in a linguistic koine that cannot be presented to his Roman readers (Trist. 5.12.57–58): *ipse mihi videor iam dedidicisse Latine / nam didici Getice Sarmaticeque loqui* ("I have the impression I forgot how to speak Latin, now that I have learned how to speak Getan and Sarmatian").

The evidence for this "barbarianization" can be seen in the sound effects of two lines (*DeDiDiCisse / DiDiCi / GetiCe SarmatiCeque*, and a couplet with about fourteen *i* sounds) which Ovid would never have written in any other circumstances. Skeptics object that Greek would have done perfectly well at Tomi, and that Ovid cannot have had many opportunities to speak Sarmatian. A little later, Ovid is able to receive information firsthand from the natives. The pertinent episode here is from *Ex Ponto* 3.2, where at last a real barbarian is allowed to speak. The speaker, typically enough in the case of information "on the spot," is a wise and loquacious old man; what is odd is the fact that he is not actually a local, but comes from Tauris (we are told in 3.2.46 that it is not very far from Tomi). Ovid quotes him in a long story of heroes of olden times, and at the end of the old man's intervention describes it as a *vulgaris fabula* (3.2.97): this description is doubly appropriate, because

33. Syme 1978, 16–17.

on the one hand the story is presented as a genuine piece of Pontic folklore handed down over the centuries (*vulgaris* = "popular"); on the other hand it is the summary of an extremely well-known text, Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which every cultivated person is already familiar with (*vulgaris* = "trite, overworked"). After this meeting with the venerable storyteller, Ovid's mastery of Getan disappears, to reappear in the last book of the *Ex Ponto* in a sensational tour de force: that of actually writing poetry in the Getan language.

As we have so little evidence about the history of Balkan poetry under the Romans, this episode (*Pont.* 4.13) merits the most careful attention; and there is an added motive for interest of an ideologico-political nature. Augustus has recently died, and Ovid presents himself as the spokesman for emperor worship in this far-off land. Shortly before the end of Ovid's career as a writer, he enables us to hear in his words the language of the Empire when faced with the actuality of a semibarbarian province. It is here, in fact, in the final poetry of Ovid's exile (*Pont.* 4), that many paths come together: official poetry, his relationship with Augustus, the presence of armed barbarians. The scholars of Ovid's late poetry have a further question to ask: in what mode would Ovid have followed the last years of his poetic vocation if he had been recalled from exile and had resumed his contacts with Rome and the dynasty of the Caesars?³⁴ "If I return home"—this is the promise in *Tristia* 5.1.39 ff.)—"my poetry of mourning will be finished: I shall be once again joyful and, in the presence of a prince whose anger has softened, I shall sing cheerful songs—but not playful ones; I shall not risk any more of the *lusus* that cost me so dear a penalty. I shall sing the songs that give pleasure to Caesar: *quod probet ipse, canam.*" This promise may seem somewhat vague, but it could be defended. If we can already distinguish a celebratory and occasional component in the poetry of exile, there is

34. Labate 1988 develops this line of inquiry. Admittedly, *Ex Ponto* has notable pieces of occasional poetry to offer: poetry that sounds orthodox and celebratory. Since most modern critics dislike this production, it was easy to forget that even panegyrics, triumphs, and the like are poetic artifacts, rich in nuances and communicative strategies (above, p. 33). Yet I find it dangerous to explain those "easy pieces" from the *Ex Ponto*, and sometimes from *Tristia*, outside the complex context of the Ovidian poetic books. I suspect a kind of deep tension between the celebratory genre and the uncorporeal quality of the poetic voice which volunteers for this job *from the Black Sea*: a spiritual revenant, an exile who describes without seeing precisely because the conventional nature of the official parade has no need of a direct witness. This tension is an implied comment on occasional poetry and on imperial rituals as a poetic theme: "decline" is Ovid's problem, not only ours.

no difficulty in imagining, for example, an Ovid who after returning home as a survivor composes court poetry, thus providing the history of Latin literature with an essential, sorely needed link between Horace's later poetry and Statius's *Silvae*. The promise of such a new poetic departure on Ovid's part is confirmed by a valuable gift given to him by a friend at Tomi, a set of silver statuettes of Augustus, Tiberius, and Livia, the kind of thing that could be used for private adoration of the imperial family. The statue of Augustus seems to be frowning at the disgraced poet, but after a long verse encomium of the entire imperial family (*Pont.* 2.8.23–70) a hopeful change takes place: now the precious images have a benign expression, and even seem to be nodding approvingly. Complete with his new household gods, the exile seems ready to reenact the reassuring model of the Augustan Aeneas, who moved into the unknown and kept nothing except the Penates and their homely cult. Later (in *Pont.* 3.8) Ovid asks himself how to repay his friend for such a valuable present: perhaps, he thinks, the best choice might be a quiver full of Scythian arrows (l. 19). As a rule Scythian arrows are poisoned.

The subject of quivers and bows reappears when Ovid finally gives rein to his vocation as a Getan poet: now we are ready for a better understanding of *Ex Ponto* 4.13. The occasion for this display of skill is provided by a letter to a colleague who occupies a position of national importance, the poet Carus; he is not only the author of an epic poem about Hercules but also tutor to the children of Germanicus, heir appointed to the new prince Tiberius. The content of Ovid's Getan song must be considered in the context of this letter: Carus is both court poet and teacher of budding Caesars, and as such he must certainly be an authority on the use of poetry to celebrate imperial virtues and to elaborate the lofty theme of royal apotheosis. Augustus's recent demise provides ideal material: and it is probably no casual coincidence that Carus happens to be a specialist on the subject of Hercules (4.8.11 ff.; 4.6.7 ff.), because any poem written about Hercules at that particular moment of history would certainly have foregrounded the hero's exemplary ascent to the heavens, as a precursor of imperial apotheoses. And in his *Phaenomena* (558–60) Germanicus himself, Carus's patron and a poet in his own right, proposes a model for poetic apotheosis on the occasion of Augustus's death, composed in the mode (which he found congenial) of stellar poetry. Compared to his more fortunate colleague, Ovid confesses his own humiliation as a poet on the decline: his poems are technically faulty, *vitiosa* (4.13.17: but this adjective can also be translated as "per-

verse," "depraved"), especially as he has now, to his shame, become *paene poeta Getes*—a, *pu-det!* Certainly he is ashamed of his diminishing poetic ability and of his use of such a rude language, but he is far from ashamed of the subject matter that he has chosen for his song, which is in fact the noblest of all possible themes: Caesar's ascent to the heavens.

Within the dramatic structure of this letter we are presented with the scene of a Latin poet addressing an audience of armed barbarians in barbarian verses. His theme can be delineated with the maximum simplicity (4.13.23–24): *materiam quaeris? laudes. De Caesare dixi. / Adiuta est novitas numine nostra dei* ("You ask about the subject? Glorification. I spoke about Caesar. My experiment was backed up by his divine power").

With the death of Augustus, Ovid finally applies his art to that simple theme on which the brilliant career of many of his successors will be founded: the young Lucan rapidly makes a name for himself with a poem that our biographical sources (Vacca and Suetonius) classify briefly as *laudes Neronis*. At last Ovid has found the right vein: and we must not undervalue the contribution provided by Augustus's divine power, which acts as the inspiring force behind this debut on unfamiliar soil (above, l. 24). It is in this way—in simultaneous translation—that the basic formula for Julio-Claudian poetry is reached, that fusion between the prince seen as inspiring Muse and the prince seen as the subject of poetic praise. Whether he is ashamed or not, Ovid is announcing to the barbarians (and translating back to Carus) the basic tenets of imperial theology and the rules of succession in the *domus Augusta* (ll. 23–32), and it is in order to achieve this result that he has almost transformed himself into *poeta Getes*. Nevertheless, the beginning of the letter had informed us that Carus cannot fail to recognize Ovid's hand in the text (l. 6: *qualis enim cumque est, non latet esse meam*). Modesty aside, Ovid is perhaps indicating to what remains of his public that the voice of *Ex Ponto* 4.13 is still his own and maintains certain well-known characteristics. Looked at from this angle, the designation *poeta Getes* again gives us food for thought. This singular form of the word *Getae* is unique in Ovid's poetry of exile. In Latin poetry of the Augustan age, "a" Getan is a designation typical of the figure of the slave in comedy, the bold and cunning servant who is secretly deceiving his masters: Propertius mentions the proverbially *astutos* . . . *Getas* (4.5.44), and Ovid uses the following words to illustrate a stock situation in comic drama: *pater vafri luditur arte Getae* (A.A. 3.332). As a Getan poet, Ovid is reverentially paying homage to

the divinity of a personage defined as *pater Augustus* (4.13.25), and might not this be just a final trick played by the “Getan” behind his master’s back?³⁵

CALLIMACHUS POLITICIZED

Even if you are not convinced so far, we must still give careful attention to the reaction of the audience presented by Ovid (4.13.35): *et caput et plenas omnis movere pharetras*.

Finally, right at the end of his career, the distance between the poet and *arma* has been eliminated: the Getans rattle their quivers to applaud a type of poetry that appears to be perfectly adapted to their culture (and completely unprofitable to its author: l. 41, *carmina nil prosunt. Nocuerunt carmina quondam* . . .). The reconciliation between Ovid and Augustus has given rise to a barbarian poetry for a barbarian audience bristling with arms. In the prologue to Callimachus’s *Aetia*, to whose text the origin of this controversial story of kings, poetics, and power can be traced, the Greek master from whom Rome had learned to write her classical poetry had compiled a list of themes that he considered unsuitable and offensive to his own poetics: among them he included the deeds of a barbarian tribe of Caspian archers, whose name is in assonance with that of the Getans, and whose geographical location is little removed from the literary setting of the “Pontic” Ovid (Call. *Aet.* 1.15 f. Pf.):³⁶

Μασσαγέται καὶ μακρὸν ὀσπεύουεν ἐπ’ ἄνδρα
Μῆδον ἠηδονίδες δ’ ὦδε μελιχρότεραι.

Let the Massagetai shoot from a distance the Median warrior—but songs are sweeter my way!

Our journey will in fact have to begin all over again: in the *Fasti*, the work that lies ahead of us, Callimachus and Augustus, arms and the

35. Using one of his favorite structural devices, the surprise diptych, Ovid resumes the theme of linguistic otherness in the next poem of the collection, 4.14, thus sapping the preconditions of 4.13. The new poem directly addresses—speaking Latin . . . —the Tomitans, who are said to be angry because Ovidian poetry offers a bleak image of their native land. The poets puts the blame on a *malus interpret* (4.14.41). But Ovid’s Roman audience of course knows what the poet thinks about Pontic barbarians. The poet explicitly parallels the situation with the Augustan indictment of the *Ars amatoria* (42, *inque novum crimen carmina nostra vocat*), and in fact, here again, he is playing on a triangulation of prosecution, defense, and audience, where there is a complicity of points of view turned against the prosecution. In the meantime, Ovid’s linguistic competence has evaporated.

36. The *Aitia* prologue was certainly among Ovid’s favorite texts, and the line before 1.15 is precisely translated at *Fasti* 6.176.

celebration of the emperor, are constantly present, and require strategies of reading that are even less straightforward. Let us try to keep in mind two problems that we have often met so far. The first concerns the relationship between the voice of the poet and that of authority. If we accept as a premise the idea that Ovid's poetry is evolving in the direction of a courtly type of position (and is thus an anticipation of the new century, a very useful missing link for our books of literary history and our articles on the decline of Latin literature), we must then explain why the whole corpus of Ovid's work presents itself as directed toward the general public. It is this public, and not the narrow circle of the nascent court, that determines the author's success and influences his choices. We must therefore consider the Augustan house and the Augustan voice as one theme among others in Ovid's poetry: the Augustan voice turns out to be a quotation within a more complex strategy, and the poet does not lend or delegate his own voice exclusively to imperial expectations.

The second point is a more general one. We often consider ourselves authorized to establish explicit boundaries between poetics and politics, thus defining fields that are in reciprocal opposition one to the other. But this operation is always carried out under our own responsibility: it is we who create this dichotomy by means of an initial decision, as for example when we assign Augustus to the field of politics and Callimachus to that of aesthetics. If we make this distinction in the world of Ovid's poetry we are likely to miss a great deal, as close reading often reveals that "Augustus" can also be an aesthetic issue and "Callimachus" a political point. Just think of the representation of *Livor*, Envy. In Roman culture this image has both a literary-critical genealogy and a political one, and we are not always justified in separating these two fields of reference: when Virgil (*G.* 3.37–39) shows us Envy relegated to the Underworld, the context does not allow us to decide whether the reference here is to a force hostile to the prince or to a personal enemy of the poet. The theme of the proem to *Georgics* 3, in which Virgil inserts this image, is in fact the connection between poetic triumph and political success. Various personifications of envy applied to the poet's enemies have a conspicuous role in Callimachus's programmatic poem: Apollo, the poet's divine defender, throws out *Pthonos* (*Hymn.* 2.105–7), and *Epigram* 21 announces that Callimachus has sung *κρείσσονα Βασκαίνης*, "out of Envy's reach." The Telchines in the prologue to the *Aetia* are the children of the Evil Eye (fr. 1.17 Pf.), the enemies of the new poetics.

Livor is a protagonist right through Ovid's poetic career. The first book of the *Amores* closes with the poet's self-defense against *Livor edax* (1.15.1 ff.). He is defending himself from criticism which does not limit itself to an attack, as is usual in the Callimachean tradition, on the poetic quality of the work, but also concerns the poet's way of life and its relationship with the standards of social morality (1–6): the poet's antagonists include not only old-fashioned concepts of poetry but also an accepted model of social behavior, the *mos maiorum*. Halfway through his *Remedia amoris* (361–98), Ovid the teacher interrupts his lesson in order to reply to *invidia* (397) and to *Livor* (369). *Livor* strikes what is high up—as do Jove's thunderbolts, Ovid immediately reminds us (370). His self-defense brings with it a carefully developed literary-critical theory (371–87): the elegiac style is closely related to licentious themes, and this type of poetry is no less irreproachable (when every text is evaluated according to the criteria of its own genre) than is Homeric epic or high tragedy. At this point the debate appears to be entirely within the province of literary criticism, and the reader almost forgets that accursed *Livor* (389, *rumpere*, *Livor edax*) had begun not with a specifically literary accusation—like that of Callimachus's Telchines—but with a moral censure: *quidam carpere libellos / quorum censura Musa proterva mea est* (361–62). Once again, we must ask ourselves if it is legitimate to interpret the battle against *Livor* as a simple question of aesthetic rivalry.

Livor reappears in the last poem in *Tristia* 4 (10.123), where Ovid proudly reminds us that not even Envy was able to throw any effective slander on his poetic merit as *vates*, and—in a position not easy to forget—Envy is once again the protagonist in the text that concludes the whole corpus, *Ex Ponto* 4.16. In his last words to his readers Ovid exhorts *Livor* to put an end to his cruelty toward a defenseless exile (52, *non habet in nobis iam nova plaga locum*). At this point in the poet's career, many critics are willing to acknowledge that *Livor* has taken on an additional political dimension: it is no longer possible to maintain a distinction between hostile literary critics and the moralists who have exiled Ovid in order to punish his work or have slandered his work in order to exile him (these two viewpoints are inextricable without access to extra-Ovidian sources). But the interesting point for me is that this division between the two fields is not perhaps valid in the case of Ovid's earlier work either. In the sixth book of the *Metamorphoses* (1–138) we made the acquaintance of a great and persecuted artist, Arachne. Her art

reaches a perfection that conforms ideally to Callimachean standards: *non illud carpere Livor / possit opus* (129–30), just as Callimachus, as we have seen, had sung “out of reach of envy” (*Epigr.* 21.4). Nevertheless this work that is above criticism arouses envy in a personage who is both a colleague and a wielder of power: it is as a rival artist that Pallas feels Envy, and her name is explicitly connected with *Livor* in line 129, but she also destroys Arachne’s work and uses the terrible powers of her status as an Olympian to transform the woman into a spider, on the pretext that certain elements of Arachne’s subject matter are not sufficiently respectful to divinity (131, *rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes*: the tapestry was an accusation against the gods). Artistic rivalry and repressive power seem to be inseparable here, and every time Ovid revives *Livor* from the repertory of the Callimachean intertext and places him on the stage, he may have all these ideas simultaneously in mind.

We could perhaps make a similar suggestion on the subject of thunderbolts. In all Ovid’s late work Augustus appears with the attributes of the divinity most dear to him, *Iuppiter Tonans*:³⁷ and the cosmic powers of Augustus-Jove, concentrated in the thunderbolt’s violence, cause Ovid’s fall. Ovid adopts the grandiose iconography of the deified prince and suits this politicized language to his own biographical situation. However, once again, this has not stopped him from being a post-Alexandrian poet. Just as previously his artistic world was not free from political concerns, so now his imperial ideology is not without metaliterary references. Jove’s thunderbolt is the ultimate weapon used in the loftiest epic poems that exist, the gigantomachies. This “colossal” production is regularly evoked by the poets of the Callimachean school³⁸ in order to formulate an extreme contrast between their own “small-scale,” “slender” poetry and a poetry that “thunders” like the battles it recounts. Ovid had gone a step further, showing that this type of poetry was not beyond his powers: *Amores* 2.1.11–12, *ausus eram . . . caelestia dicere bella . . . et satis oris erat* (*satis oris*, “enough voice,” unlike Callimachus or Propertius—but in Ovid the phrase also has the value of “brazenness, cheek”; cf. *Her.* 16.102). He differs from his predecessors, who usually declare themselves not only hostile to gigantomachies but also incapable of composing them: no, he was good at them, but they were quite useless to him in the conquest of a pretty girl, and so Jove’s

37. See n. 23 above.

38. E.g., Prop. 2.1.39–40, *sed neque . . . intonet angusto pectore Callimachus*; 3.9.47, *Iovis arma*; Nisbet and Hubbard 1970 on Hor. *Carm.* 2.12.7.

thunderbolts (which do not open the right doors) are summarily dismissed. The poet's ironic attitude of superiority toward the image of Jove and his thunderbolts recalls and transforms Callimachus's original programmatic concept ("don't expect me to produce a noisy song: thundering is Jove's prerogative, and it is just not my line") in the prologue to the *Aetia* (fr. 1.19 ff. Pf.): the cruel irony in the *Tristia* is that after all these years this Thunderer and Lightnigner actually *comes to life*, and while the exiled Ovid still sees in these vengeful heavens the threat that had been exorcised by Callimachean aesthetics, at the same time the defenseless poet finds himself, in a certain sense, playing a real-life part in a downgraded gigantomachy, having become the target of Jove's *arma* no less than were the scalars of the heavens.

AUGUSTUS AND "AUGUSTUS"

It is worth our while to reread the Ovidian texts without paying over-much attention to preliminary distinctions, or establishing clear-cut boundaries between poetics and politics, between the serious and the playful, between the poetry of love, of the court, and of exile. Our preliminary explorations suggest that the effect created by Ovid's poetry is to make these dividing lines uncertain and problematic. A critical approach that bases itself unquestioningly on the hierarchies of Augustan discourse risks seeing too little, because on the one hand this discourse is not merely an independent background to Augustan poetry but is also its product, and on the other hand, in the particular case of Ovid, there is room for suspicion that this discourse may be "in inverted commas," an effect which is part of the poet's intertextual practice, and not a direct reflection of external political factors. Nor am I prepared to take on trust the repressive authority imposed by Augustus as potential addressee of Ovid's work. No other Latin poet states so clearly and so constantly the idea that the absolute arbiter of his success should be a homogeneous and anonymous audience.³⁹ This independent relationship between the poet and his audience, which Ovid never denies, has the effect of calling "Augustus" into the play of literary communication as a subject for

39. See e.g. Citroni 1989, 140–43. He also notes that, with this audience in mind, Ovid keeps writing in exile and hoping that the public opinion could put a pressure on Augustus. Perhaps this expectation sounds rather utopian, if viewed against the realities of political control under the Empire; but it is true that the poetics of exile operates within this horizon, and not even the late emergence of individual addressees weakens the responsibility of the general audience as Ovid's truest target and touchstone.

representation rather than as the symbolic “main addressee” of the poetic act. And the prince constitutes a fascinating theme for the poet of the *Metamorphoses*: political discourse has constructed an Augustus who is a changeable figure, fluctuating as need be between the Roman citizen and the god on earth. The poet thus finds, ready for use, a character with a new kind of flexibility, who can be at times “civil” and at times sublime.

We thus find here two interconnected prejudices that can be overcome simultaneously. First, we must not oppose Augustan discourse to literature as if opposing something rigid and schematic to something “poetic” and vague. This language of authority owes its success to the very fact that it is flexible, pervasive, and rich in associations. Second, many literary historians seem to take it for granted that the introduction of the “courtly” element (in the late Augustan age and the Julio-Claudian period) automatically brings about a sort of fossilization in poetry: under political pressure poets are reduced to using certain compulsory expressive modes, and this lack of authenticity leads to impoverishment. This is not necessarily true: the arrival of “Augustus” represents an enriching challenge for Ovid’s poetics. If we take as our starting point an extremely close reading of the texts (and this is the direction that we shall most often follow in this book), we shall begin to see black-and-white alternatives, such as “conformism” versus “subversion,” as inadequate.

We shall often come up against these complexities because we are about to enter the difficult central zone of Ovid’s corpus with a text in which (to recall a symbolic square) the loftiest of subjects (*ROMA*) contends with the legacy of light Callimachean verse (*AMORes*, and, if we like, also *MetAMORphoses*), while the exigencies of celebration and the reconstruction of Augustan values are continually postponed (*MORA*), and the poet retraces and contests the work of his inescapable predecessor, the author of *arma virumque* (*MARO*).

PART TWO

Ovid Writes Rome

Calendar and Poetic Form

My approach to the *Fasti* is rather different from those currently in vogue.¹ Remarkably little agreement has been reached among scholars in the debate on the poem's ideological meaning, and it is improbable that any further discussion along those lines could throw much new light on it. An extremely substantial and intelligent monograph, numbering no fewer than six hundred pages, has come to interesting conclusions regarding both the aetiological framework of the poem—the inquiry into the “causes” of the calendar around which it is structured—and its ideological baggage. I quote two extracts from these conclusions, which concern respectively the first and then the second of these two aspects: “Naïveté? A basic incomprehension of the religious context? . . . No, quite the contrary: the infinitely subtle and daring art of the illusionist”; “There can be no doubt that what we see in the Augustan poet is

1. I am thinking of specialized studies (but see below) and especially of general monographs on Ovid (where not infrequently the image of the *Fasti* is conventional, or dim, or absent; Galinsky 1975 has several references to the erotic production, but no mention of the *Fasti*), handbooks of literary history, and comprehensive treatments of Augustan culture.

The most productive studies, for my purposes at least, are often of a shorter compass: Wallace-Hadrill 1987; Harries 1989, 1991; Hinds 1992 (a seminal work); Feeney 1992 (accessible to me only after my Italian text was completed). Santini 1973–74, which deserves special mention, is a paper on the representation of the gods that was absolutely not mainstream at the time of publication. Other more recent material, like Miller 1991, 1992, and Brugnoli and Stok 1992, is quoted in the bibliography but not systematically taken into account in my book.

obedience to the ideals of the prince, who is anxious to recreate in his subjects nostalgia for the Golden Age. But it is also the profound conviction of the inspired poet: what *vates* could ever criticize the legendary fabric out of which he intends to make a sacred history?"² Could an Augustan *vates* conceivably apply himself to deconstructing the discourse, both narrative and ideological, that is supposed to form the framework of his poetic project? For Danielle Porte the answer is no: the poet of the *Fasti* treats religion, where the Augustan interest is particularly strong, just as Roman patriotism commands. But after all, this is the very same narrator as the poet who, only two hundred and fifty pages earlier in Porte's massive study, made his appearance as a subtle and daring illusionist, a destructive manipulator of myths and causes.

There is a certain type of criticism that confidently goes in search of the basic, original intention of the author: in Ovid's case these intentions can only lie in the sphere of his political convictions, which are the central nucleus to be recovered and brought to light. We could list other variations on this approach, in which the role of custodian of the poem's truth is assigned to its "implicit reader," or to its "original context" as a dramatic performance; or else the authority who "commissions" the work is seen as the arbiter of its meaning. If we do not believe in this hierarchy of excavation by levels, according to which there is always one profound and original truth underneath the surface of the text, we had better hold on to the duplicity that emerges from Porte's work: the double image of the illusionist who plays with form and the *vates* who proclaims an official truth (at which point the illusionist vanishes into thin air—which is not surprising, if he is any good as an illusionist: it is his job to vanish).

A new reading of the *Fasti* should patiently set out from this very duplicity, to see whether we are right in giving separate treatment to the poem's content (Augustan and traditional) and its form (Alexandrian, unstable, corrosive); and this reading should then inquire whether it is correct to presuppose a perfect harmony in the form of its contents, or to read "Augustus" and "Rome" as stable and unitary references.

Of all Augustan poems it is the *Fasti* that most calls for a specifically literary method of interpretation. The rudimentary state of literary analysis of the poem has for many years produced an oversimplified image of it in historical and literary-historical textbooks (I quote anonymously two examples, which I am sure are typical): "Ovid unenthusias-

2. Porte 1985a, 190, 432.

tically does his duty as a *civis Romanus*"; "Ovid, too, in the end, had to pay his tribute to the Prince." This has allowed the poem to be reduced to its professed content, that of giving information on the feast days and traditions of the Roman year.

Critical interest has been monopolized by the religious and folkloristic material that can be extracted from the poem, and what spirit of inquiry is left over after this search for the golden bough is often dedicated to easily defined subject-headings, such as frivolity, libertinage, Greek cooking, Alexandrian mannerism, or imperial rococo. Attempts at a more synthetic approach have been made, but when we read them we often find ourselves at a parting of the ways: readers with literary interests are directed toward a sort of "garden of delights" under the rule of "badinage" and "marivaudage" (a somewhat antiquated French vocabulary is sometimes "de rigueur"), while the others are offered a generous number of solid lessons in Indo-European mysticism, complete with wolf-warriors and mysterious fire dances.

I will however take back these ironic words straightaway—the comment on the second of these alternative roads, at any rate. It would be all too easy to blame the religious historians and anthropologists: aren't they guilty of having seized on this one work, out of the whole Ovidian corpus, in order to exploit it as a mine of information and of survivals? We all know that historians and anthropologists attribute greater value to what is generally accepted and conformist in a literary text than to what is conflictual and ironic.³ After all, these disciplines (especially when their object of study is the classical world) generally work on the presupposition that every individual text is a crossroads of collective codes: a complete disregard of this presupposition makes it extremely difficult for anybody to interpret any text. Thus the more accurately a text reflects shared ideas and images, the collective ways of representing (and the less independent and distorting it is), the more valuable it is as a source.

But to insist on this point would be to indulge in useless recrimination: it is the "formalists"—following their own interests, and applying their own craft—who should have appreciated the complexity of the text and the importance of its individual voice. And it would also be ungenerous recrimination. It is the very anthropologists and historians of Roman

3. Perhaps the excessive use of a concept like *mentalité* (on which see Lloyd 1990) is responsible for this style of interpretation, which stresses, and strains, the shared and the communal and sometimes overlooks crises and dynamics.

culture who have recently suggested at least two ideas that could be of decisive significance for new literary interpretations. As we shall be meeting them often in these pages, we can limit ourselves here to merely glancing at these two points. The first is that if the function of a calendar is usually that of constructing and keeping active the image of a community, in the case of the Roman calendar the image of "Romanness" that it offers is not univocal but is flexible and open to a number of different options.⁴ This is an important concept for an understanding of Ovid's poetry, but we shall soon see that it will require a certain amount of modification if we intend to apply it to the Augustan calendar. The second point is that Ovid's contribution to the definition of this image of Rome is by no means passive, especially because of the curious relationship between past and present that is established in the *Fasti*. This relationship is rich in subtle implications because it inevitably comes up against Augustan discourse.⁵ These are important contributions, and it is from the historical-religious perspective that they have first come, for the very reason that it is in the course of liberating itself from an old-fashioned habit—that of impatiently discarding all late and arbitrary accumulations in Ovid's text in order to arrive as rapidly as possible at its "original" treasures.

There is a great deal of interest in store, therefore, for anyone who wants to undertake a fresh study of the work's references, via its calendrical structure and its explanations of the various feast days, to the culture of Augustan Rome. Once again, however, such an analysis runs the risk of limiting the interest of the *Fasti* to that of a mere testimony. If the poem is stripped of its specifically literary element (which is again seen as a removable coat of varnish), then in the place of fertility festivals, harvest celebrations, and archaic shepherds, its new protagonists will be urban classes, political projects, imperial rituals. This is the line adopted by the trend so clearly proposed by Frascchetti: "En choisissant un sujet comme les Fastes, Ovide proclamait *sans ambages* son adhésion globale au nouveau régime. Car, *par sa nature même*, le calendrier nouveau, qui est au fondement du projet et du poème où célébrations traditionnelles et nouvelles fêtes venaient se recouper, ne pouvait *en aucun cas* accueillir des éléments de fronde ou de contestation."⁶

4. Beard 1987: my comment on the Augustan calendar as a less flexible, and even locked, construct is not directed against the main perspective of this original and energetic essay; see also Scheid 1992.

5. Wallace-Hadrill 1987.

6. Frascchetti 1990a, xii.

I could not resist italicizing three phrases: *sans ambages*, *par sa nature même*, and *en aucun cas* are exactly the kind of assumptions that I want to look at very carefully in this study. But I intend to approach these presuppositions in an indirect and progressive way, and so I am going to start with an aspect which is apparently less predetermined (in fact it has long remained marginal to the study of the *Fasti*): the poem's literary program and what it has to say about poetics.

PROGRAMS WITHOUT POLEMICS

The initial proem of the *Fasti* defines the work's literary affiliations with an almost meticulous precision that has few parallels in the proemial tradition:

Tempora (1) *cum causis* (2) *Latium digesta per annum*
lapsaque sub terras orta que signa (3) *canam* (4).

Sacra (4) *recognosces annalibus* (5) *eruta priscis* (4)
et quo sit merito quaeque notata dies (4; 6).
(1.1–2, 7–8)

The times—and their origins—arranged through the Latin year, stars setting and rising—of that I'll sing. . . . You're going to learn about rituals dug up in archaic Annals, and how each day won its special mark.

Leaving aside (1) *tempora*, which acts independently as a convenient summarizing label in correspondence with the title ("Times"), we can see clearly that (2) *causis* is a declaration of the work's debt to Callimachus (*Aetia*), just as (3) *lapsaque sub terras orta que signa* acknowledges the debt to Aratus, the poet who had asked Zeus and the Muses for the ability to "tell the stars" (*Phaen.* 17).⁷ Propertius's promise to sing aetiological elegies (4.1.69, *sacra diesque canam et cognomina prisca locorum*) is referred to more obliquely, as is proper in the case of a recent Latin model: its key words are separated and less obviously recognizable (our 4): *canam*, *sacra*, *priscis*, and *dies*. The importance of the Roman archaic tradition is recalled by (5) *annalibus*: this poem about the Roman year is also indebted to the annual chronicles of the *pontifices*, known in fact as *annales*, but we cannot exclude a reference to Ennius's homonymous work (a far from negligible source for certain parts of the *Fasti*) and also to that of Accius, less famous, which as far as we know

7. More particularly, *orta*—"rising," therefore "visible"—points to the title *Phaenomena*.

was highly relevant to the theme of the calendar and its aetiology.⁸ Finally, even (6) *dies* can have its value in literary genealogy: echoes like *vates operose dierum* (1.101) and *Latinorum vates operose dierum* (3.177) remind us of a work attributed to Hesiod that was already calendrical to some degree, known as *The Days*.⁹ (The *Works* clearly are of less interest to Ovid: the poet, as the Alexandrian tradition requires, is *operosus*, but his poem is concerned with feast days and holidays, not with an exhausting workday agenda.) While invoking Callimachus, Aratus, Propertius, Hesiod, and perhaps some archaic Roman predecessor, the poet nevertheless makes it clear that this will also be a eulogistic poem: it will include the *laudes* (1.15) and the festivals of the reigning dynasty (1.9). Public sacrifices, as everyone knows, are on the increase as a prerogative of the Caesars. For Germanicus, reading the *Fasti* will be like leafing through an album.

What is striking in all this is the absence of tensions and polemics. For the first time in the history of Roman poetry, poetic objectives on the Alexandrian model (see the clear allusions to Callimachus and Aratus) are unproblematically applied to a celebratory and official function. Propertius 4.1, which effectively anticipates this situation, is a complex text, ironical and full of contradictions: in order to become a Roman Callimachus, the poet had to turn a deaf ear to the threatening prophecies of a horoscope recited by Horus (a charlatan perhaps, but also an Apollo in the guise of a trickster and buffoon).¹⁰ In Callimachus's work, it was Apollo who instructed the poet to choose the road of "light" poetry: in Virgil and also in Propertius, he put in an appearance to advise them against celebratory epic. In the fourth book of Propertius, the formation of a compromise is proclaimed, but signs of indecision and repentance are clearly visible. Ovid, on the contrary, combines the Alexandrian tradition and official poetry without any signs of remorse, and he keeps to the program that his initial proem had announced in such authoritative tones.

If we look at its poetic form, however, the constitution of the *Fasti* is bifocal and highly ambiguous. The poem is permeated by a continual

8. *Annales* fr. 3 Büchner deals with the *Saturnalia* as a festival related to the Greek *Kronia*.

9. As Hardie 1991, 59 and n. 40 notes, citing Verg. *G.* 1.276–77, *dies . . . operum*: I have to admit that at such an early stage the title *Works and Days* can only be a guess, but it is hard to believe that Hesiod could be an untitled text for Virgil or for Ovid. For an independent guess based on Virgil, see the commentary by Thomas 1988 on *G.* 1.276.

10. Horos and Apollo are two names for the same entity in the culture of Alexandria.

tension between the realm of elegy and that of epic.¹¹ This tension is between two realms that are neither of them “pure,” because epic includes heroic poetry and the didactic tradition, while in the elegy the lightest of erotic poetry coexists with more serious traditions (such as the *Aetia* and Propertius 4, themselves “impure” and polymorphous texts). Didactic epic and “aetiological” elegy (epic of moderate height, not war-like, and “rising” elegy) are destined to interweave in the program of the *Fasti*, a didactic work written in elegiac couplets, while heroic epic and love elegy—which in theory ought to be excluded and which are by statute incompatible—continue to skirmish on the borders of the poem. Epic, in fact, always rises on the horizon when a military anniversary is in sight or (more insistently) when the prince’s achievements present themselves for celebration. The presence of love elegy on the edges of the poem is much less easy to account for, but we shall take our immediate start with the relationship between the *Fasti* and elegiac poetry: the proem to the fourth book offers us an excellent example.¹²

VENUS’S ARMY AND THE DISARMING OF MARS

“Alma fave, dixi, geminorum mater Amorum”;
 ad vatem voltus rettulit illa suos.
 “quid tibi” ait “mecum? certe maiora canebas.
 num vetus in molli pectore volnus habes?”
 “scis, dea” respondi “de volnere.” risit, et aether
 protinus ex illa parte serenus erat.
 “saucius an sanus numquid tua signa reliqui?
 tu mihi propositum, tu mihi semper opus.
 quae decuit primis sine crimine lusimus annis;
 nunc teritur nostris area maior equis.
 tempora cum causis, annalibus eruta priscis,
 lapsaque sub terras orta que signa cano.”

(*Fasti* 4.1–12)

“Nourishing mother of the twin loves, indulge me.” She turned her face in this poet’s direction. “What do you want with me? Surely you were singing a grander song. Have you got an old wound in your sensitive heart?” “You know, goddess,” I replied, “about the wound.” She smiled, and at once that region in the sky was cloudless. “In sickness or in health, have I ever deserted your service? You were my only subject, my only work. In my early years, as was proper, I dallied innocently; now my horses are running on a bigger

11. On the dynamic interaction of literary genres as a strategy of literary semiotics I recommend Conte 1984, 9 ff.; Hinds 1987a, 115 ff.

12. Hinds 1992 is an excellent reading of this proemium.

track. The times—and their origins—dug up in ancient chronicles, stars rising and setting—of that I sing.”

Venus is invoked as patroness of the month of April (and in fact the weather visibly “si apre”—opens up—in l. 6: the development of the poem suggests that of the year); her name, which the poet holds back until the final sentence of the invocation (l. 14) is scattered through the text in the series of alliterating bisyllables (*Vatem*, *VoltUS*, *VEtUS*, *VolnUS*).

The dramatic nucleus of this situation is clear to anyone who remembers Venus as the tutelar power of the *Amores*, dismissed by the poet in a line (*Am.* 3.15.1) which shows a marked assonance with *Fasti* 4.1: *Quaere novum vatem, tenerorum mater Amorum*. The position of this line in the poetic book, its context, and the use of a suggestive adjective like *tener* all indicate that Venus is mother both of the Amorini and of Ovid’s homonymous work.¹³ A few lines later, when this double meaning is no longer necessary, Cupid has become a character in the singular (3.15.15–16): *culte puer puerique parens Amathusia culti / aurea de campo vellite signa meo*.

These are the same *signa* as those that Ovid denies having betrayed in the *Fasti*. And, out of all the possible attributes that learned poetry offers for Venus, here she is designated with the title *Amathusia*, so that her name can extend the play on the Latin root of the *Amores* and of *amatory* poetry. As the goddess of love and of the *Amores*, Venus resents being abandoned by her poet.

Another book (another “fourth” book) of Augustan poetry opens with a similar problem. After a long truce, and like our present Ovid ripe in years, Horace once again confronts Venus (*Carm.* 4.1.1–2): *Intermissa Venus diu / rursus bella moves? parce precor, precor* (“Venus, do you start again wars which were interrupted for a long while? Please, please, spare me”).¹⁴

13. McKeown 1989 ad loc. is rather skeptical. Yet on self-reflexive and literary-critical implications of *tener* in Ovid, see the material in Pianezzola 1989, 159; *mollis* at *Fasti* 4.4 belongs in the same family group.

14. I recommend three brilliant readings of 4.1: Putnam 1986, 33–47; Ferri 1993, 17–33; Nagy 1994. Putnam and Nagy are very concerned with the presence of Sappho’s fr. 1 V., on which see below.

The cruel mother who starts the action of book 4 will become the mother of the Aeneadae in the last line of the same book. Ovid reopens a gap in this difficult process of integration (on the dynamics of Horace’s book 4, from erotic to political Venus, see Putnam 1986, 296).

Horace's lyric poetry could come under Venus's rule. The goddess is invoked in line 5 as *mater saeva Cupidinum*, and it is interesting to note that Horace too is quoting a youthful statement of his own: the same designation of Venus opened *Carmina* 1.19.1, a poem in which a much younger Horace (and one more involved in love lyric) attempted to negotiate with the power of love. Like Ovid, Horace cites his former relationship with Venus, which is also a poetic program, in order to give clearer emphasis to the distance that separates the two contexts. The readers of *Carmina* 4 are about to discover a rather different poetic vein. The poet is now going to offer Venus a substitute in his own place, the brilliant young Paulus Fabius Maximus: it is he, Horace promises the goddess, who *late signa feret militiae tuae* (4.1.16). The Ovid of the *Fasti* defends himself with the same image: *numquid tua signa reliqui?* (4.7). Paulus Fabius Maximus, to whom *Carmina* 4.1 was dedicated, has in the meantime grown older: he is the only living person (apart from the Augustan family) to whom the *Fasti* give a certain amount of attention, and he is no longer a suitable age for the service of Venus and amorous poetry: in fact Ovid's poem will conclude with the celebration of his marriage with a highborn lady.¹⁵

In this proem Ovid uses learned literary allusions to describe his resignation from Venus's service. The goddess interprets her poet's abandonment of her in impeccably poetological terms: *certe maiora canebas* comes from Virgil's fourth eclogue. It is embarrassing for the poet to have to invite her into the month which is sacred to her (April, according to Ovid, comes from Aphrodite), as he runs the risk of reopening an old wound. Ovid's answer, in the same Virgilian key, is in lines 9–12: by means of the verb *lusimus* he both looks backward and takes his distance,¹⁶ as did Virgil when he reread his own career in the *Georgics* (4.565, *lusi*).¹⁷ We are presented with a metaliterary drama involving the careers of Horace, Virgil, and Ovid himself: all three of them, each in his

15. See below, pp. 150–52; 269 ff. On the marriage theme in Hor. *Carm.* 4.1, see Habinek 1986.

16. It is hard to prove that the proemium to the fourth book is among the passages that were reworked in the exile period (on the whole problem see Fantham 1985, important also for the methodology). Granting this hypothesis, we could perceive in *sine crimine lusimus* a suggestive retrospection by a guilty Ovid: now his juvenile *carmina* are *crimina* for good.

17. There might be a hint that the *Fasti*, just like the *Georgics* in Virgil's career, have an intermediate status between epic achievement and light, playful verse. Elegiac authors like Propertius and the young Ovid have a vested interest in the *Bucolics* as a "fine-spun" work, comparable to the private and Callimachean kind of poetry that they are practicing.

own way, are engaged in an ascent from light to serious poetic composition. Moreover, two of the most influential love poets in first-century Rome, Catullus and Philodemus, had made similar statements to mark a change in their lifestyle and poetics: *multa satis lusi* (Catull. 68.17); "I used to play, when the time was right for playing" (Philodem. *A.P.* 5.112).¹⁸

We may think that the crisis is over when, in lines 11–12, the text turns into a perfect self-quotation. This almost verbatim repetition of the *Fasti*'s own initial proem (exactly the same words—*tempora cum caussis . . . lapsaque sub terras orta que signa cano*—were used in *Fasti* 1.1–2, except for the verb *canam*) is a styleme proper to a "midway proem," rich in self-reflection.¹⁹ The poet repropose his initial program, almost as a demarcation line. Here Ovid reasserts his new profession, but at the same time he also seems to confess that some impurity still remains. In the very center of the poem (that is, of the published text that has come down to us, in six books) Venus is readmitted. The officially made declarations in the initial proem showed no trace of this "light" element. We might think that the poet is prepared to make a few small concessions to Venus (always advisable when one has to do with a goddess), but only in order to acclimatize her to the serious world of the *Fasti*, and without compromising the nature of his new project. His choice of the couplet, on the other hand, continues to create an ambiguous link with his past poetry, erotic and didactic-erotic. One begins to suspect that the poet has to pay a price for his submission to Venus (*tu mihi propositum, tu mihi semper opus*). In fact there are no great traditions of Venus-worship in April, and it could be argued that Ovid has forcibly carved out a place for her in the calendar. He loses no time in showing us that he has done this as a tribute to the prince's genealogy (4.19–132): the long section that follows the proem combines genealogical honors (see below, part II, chapter 4), etymological research, and an actual hymn dedicated to the goddess. But readers of this proem cannot help thinking that Venus is present above all as a link with the frivolous love poetry of the poet's

18. Philodemus is turning to philosophy; Catullus is prevented from writing love poetry by affliction. Note that in the same line Catullus mentions his previous acquaintance with Venus (*non est dea nescia nostri*) and in the following one he alludes to Sappho's erotic imagery (*quae dulcem curis miscet amaritatem*): both moves are consistent with Ovid's rhetoric strategy in our proemium. On the Catullan *lusi* as the first declaration of "the union of lover and poet" in Roman elegy, see the incisive remarks of Commager 1974, 5.

19. On the idea that the *Fasti* are—from a certain point of view—a finished text, see my part III. From this angle, it would be legitimate to refer to Conte 1984, 121 ff., a study of "proems in the middle" as a privileged site of programmatic self-definition.

past. It is by no means clear how this elegiac element can be reconciled with the new and loftier tasks that lie before the poet of the *Fasti*.²⁰ Ovid's protest that he has not deserted the *signa* of Love has a curious assonance with Tibullus's attempt to attract a poetic friend from loftier poetry back down to his earlier, lighter vein:

ure, puer, quaeso, tua qui ferus otia liquit
atque iterum *erronem sub tua signa* voca!
(2.6.5–6)²¹

The reconciliation that closes this prologue indicates Venus's dominating influence in the inspiration of the *Fasti*. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the goddess's first words (4.3, *quid tibi . . . mecum?*) recall the triumphant (re)entry of Aphrodite in Sappho's erotic poetry (1.15–18 LP: "With a smile you ask me what the matter is, this time, and why I have called you, this time, and what I am looking for . . .").²² No other deity in the *Fasti* has such a clearly marked role, that of guiding light rather than simple source of information—and this suggests a highly intimate relationship (4.15–17):

Mota Cytheriaca leviter mea tempora myrto
contigit et "Coeptum perfice" dixit "opus."
Sensimus, et causae subito patuere dierum. . . .

Stirred by this, she gently touched my temples with her myrtle from Cythera, and said, "Complete the work you've begun." I felt, and suddenly the origins of the days were revealed. . . .

Coeptum perfice . . . opus is an echo of line 8, *tu mihi propositum, tu mihi semper opus*, and validates this important admission. We must not overlook the symbolic value of the myrtle: for Ovid this plant is a favorite metaphor for elegiac writing, not merely a casual preference among the various botanical images used by Augustan poets.²³ By prevailing

20. Note also that Horace's *Carm.* 4.1, an important model here, can be read as a farewell to Venus concluded by a new surrender to Venus (on the "da capo" structure and its implications, see Tarrant 1995, 44–46).

21. For the interpretation of Tibullus's address to Macer it is important to consider the parallel of Ovid *Am.* 2.18 adduced by O'Neil 1967.

22. Nagy 1994 and Putnam 1986, 33–47, have stressed the importance of fr. 1 for Hor. *Carm.* 4.1, one of the main models in this proemium. I note that this fragment (more exactly, poem, since it is entirely transmitted to us) has always been Sappho One since the Alexandrian canonic edition of Sappho's complete works. In a separate study, I will discuss the programmatic value of texts which Roman readers perceived as first poems in books of classical authors; it seems reasonable to expect that the reception of "first poems" was influenced by their editorial placement.

23. Thibault 1969, 35.

over Apollo's laurel and Bacchus's ivy, the myrtle declares the nature of the *Amores* (1.1.29, 1.15.37, 2.1.34) as erotic poetry in the strongest sense of the word, as well as its distinction from other poetic genres. Venus has taken over completely from the traditional duo of Apollo and Bacchus, and the effects of her sacred plant on the poet of the *Fasti* suggest that the *Amores* are not so far distant as they might seem to be. The expression *tempora myrto* brings back conflicting memories: before indicating the light muse of the *Amores* (1.1.28), it had been used by Virgil to garland the heads of Octavian (*G.* 1.28) and Aeneas (*Aen.* 5.72): it is as if Ovid has wrested it away from an Augustan monopoly.

As for the gesture of touching the poet's temples (l.15), Stephen Hinds has acutely observed that *tempora* ("times" instead of "temples") is the first word in this poem, and thus has the value of an actual alternative title.²⁴ If what the goddess is touching is not only her poet's temples and mind but also his poem, then we must expect the *Fasti* to be exposed to a strong risk of contagion. This argument could be taken even further, because, read in this way, the scene recalls an instructive precedent in Ovid's principal model for the *Fasti*, Callimachus's *Aetia*: *causae . . . dierum* (l. 17) is therefore a very pertinent backward reference, from Ovid's "Times" to Callimachus's "Causes." In a programmatic passage of his first book, Callimachus entreated the Graces to place their hands, laden with perfumed essences, on the text of his work, "on my elegies" (7.13–14 Pf., ἐλέγοισι [. . .] ἐμοῖς). This contact between the Graces and the *Aetia* is a guarantee of success for Callimachus's poetry, which the Graces infuse with all their fascination.²⁵ We can thus infer that Venus—brushing her scented evergreen lightly over these *tempora*²⁶—will have a similar effect on the *Fasti* as well as on their author. Among the merits of Venus celebrated in the long list of her virtues that follows (4.85 ff.) there is one that has some reason to interest us here. Numbered among Venus's manifold contributions to the civilizing of mankind, there is also poetry, or at least a well-defined genre of poetry: the first *carmen* (4.109) to be composed was that of a lover, and it was a love song, sung outside the closed door of a *puella* who had refused him.

24. Hinds 1992, 87 with n. 7, who notices the literal recall of *tempora* (1.1) only three lines earlier.

25. Bing 1988, 18, notes that Callimachean poetry is here represented as a text, a written artifact, although it is still in progress.

26. The transition from Venus to the perfumes of the Charites is made easy if we remember that Aphrodite as a goddess of desire is a regular user of those fragrances, see *hymn. Hom. Aphr.* 61–63. For a possible link between Callimachus and myrtle cf. Meleager A.P. 4.1.21–22.

Literature, and rhetoric too (cf. 109–14), originates from the situation of the *paraklausithyron*: and Venus is the goddess who has provided the necessary means and art. This is elegiac imperialism; the *paraklausithyron* and love poetry in general, the elegy, have been promoted to the rank of the initial stage of literature, and are traced back to Venus.²⁷ And this origin, united with Venus's influence over the *Fasti*, causes the poem—from the metrical point of view at least, but also perhaps in other senses as well—to fall within the elegiac tradition, at the same time that Venus and her myrtle wand are being dissociated from a certain form of Augustan monopoly.

However, many other programmatic statements in the *Fasti* assure us that the poem is to be read in a didactic key, according to a far more serious and constructive tradition. But in this tradition, whether Greek or Roman, there is no precedent for the use of the elegiac couplet: the *Ars amatoria* already represented a similar “scandal” in the field of genre,²⁸ but it is much more sensational in this new situation. The opening line of the fourth book, using the dense and allusive style that is proper to proems, already contains in itself the essence of this tension between literary genres. We have already noted the repetition in *geminorum mater Amorum* of a programmatic sentence from the close of the *Amores*, and therefore we can conclude that here too the word *Amores* contains a significant complex of meanings, indicated by the back reference to a work of the poet's youth.²⁹ But the memories recalled by the

27. *Carmen vigilatum* merges love with Alexandrian or neoteric learned poetry; the context is about being sleepless for serenades, *paraklausithyra*, but there is a tradition of expressing with *vigilia* and the like the idea of *agrypnia*, the sleepless condition of the artist who labors over perfecting his verses (so e.g. Call. A.P. 9. 507; Cinna fr. 11.1 Büchner). As a whole, the hymn to Venus points to Lucretius, a poet who knew how to *noctes vigilare serenas* (Lucr. 1.142), but for quite different reasons, and who minted the sarcastic expression *exclusus amator* (Lucr. 4.1177). Ovid catches the opportunity to turn the philosophical and cosmic Venus of Lucretius into an elegiac one: a convincing proof of the allegiance to Venus which had been stated at the start of book 4 of the *Fasti*. There is a strong difference from the kind of conversion that Horace had operated on the Lucretian Venus at the end of his fourth book of odes: there the allusion to *De rerum natura* (see Putnam 1986, 295) is oriented toward a unifying Augustan perspective, and the Lucretian Venus, goddess of peace, supports the harmony of Augustan order.

28. It is difficult to point to other didactic poems in elegiacs before Ovid: note the curious Greek poem on astronomy discussed by Ludwig 1904.

29. *Geminorum* is one of those designations that provoke a great deal of discussion by religious historians, but affectionate readers of Ovid would have probably remembered, on a more secular level, that the *Amores* (according to the prefatory epigram) had been published in two editions: starting from the basic idea, a recurrent one in Ovid, that books are children of their author, one could label them as a “twin,” that is, a double offspring. This point was made independently by Michael Reeve in a seminar (Cambridge 1990) and by Miller 1991, 152 n. 76.

reference to the *Amores* are in direct conflict with the first note of the opening line, *Alma*. . . . No one can deny that this is a solemn adjective; Horace describes Venus in this way in his last published lyric sentence (4.15.31) as being the progenetrix of Aeneas and Augustus. Readers who seriously accept the didactic matrix of the *Fasti* are presented with a meaningful coincidence: here is a didactic poet who decides to sing of the spring, and opens with an appeal to the hymnological register (the fact that with the very next line this appeal degenerates into an epigrammatic dialogue is unimportant). One can hardly avoid thinking of Lucretius's sublime model, in which he inaugurated his great work with the word *alma* (1.2) and immediately continued with a description of the spring and a prayer to Venus to show herself springlike and serene.³⁰ This in fact is the dominating allusion in the hymn to Venus that Ovid is about to orchestrate (91 ff.; *alma* is intentionally repeated in l. 90).³¹ Ovid has concentrated in a nutshell the conflict between literary genres over the way in which his poem is to be read.

For Lucretius, Venus was a sublime protectress and had nothing in common with the goddess of Ovidian erotic elegy: the *De rerum natura* opens with a solemn presentation of her as the mother of the Aeneades, and this is the aspect to which Ovid will give importance a few lines on (19 ff.: "April is your month because, O Caesar, your house descends from Venus . . ."). Now the goddess reigns not only over the Romans but over the closed circle of Aeneas's descendants, those who hold power. This Venus is a prism—an ambiguous signifier that concentrates in herself a plurality of literary influences, as well as of ideological issues, as is typical of the *Fasti*: she is both erotic and elegiac, didactic and Julian. It is up to the reader to decide whether to attempt a synthesis or to accept the irreconcilable nature of the different voices that the poet keeps in play.

30. *Aeneadum genetrix* is employed as a titular reference at *Trist.* 2.261, and the following line immediately mentions *alma Venus*, thus creating a representative selection of *Lucr.* 1.1–2.

De rerum natura is not the only didactic poem where action starts at springtime; cf. *Hes. Op.* 458—not an absolute beginning but the opening of a new thematic section—and especially *Verg. G.* 1.43 (the very first words after the proemium), *vere novo*. But Lucretius goes one better and suggests that the genesis of his poem is a part of the universal spring fertilized by Venus. I refer to 1.20–25: "you, goddess, who control the *rerum natura* (!), be my companion as I start my verses *de rerum natura*." The didactic poem is viewed as the nature it describes; poem and nature enter life together.

31. On *Fasti* 4.91–132 as a Lucretian memory see the useful discussion of Ferrarino 1986, 309 ff.

The proem to the fourth book makes a pair with that of the third,³² which presents a perfectly symmetrical oscillation of meanings. March is the month of Mars, and the proem reflects this dominant note. The structure itself of the *Fasti* thus creates both a parallel and a contact between Mars and Venus, and the reader, who cannot ignore this connection between the two central books of the poem, is invited to interpret the juxtaposition of the two divine figures. Once again, there is room for doubt about the interpretative register to be adopted. The Homeric myth of the love between Ares and Aphrodite unites Mars and Venus in a couple linked together by a strong sexual attraction: Ovid had already used this story, setting it in the eroticized world of the *Ars amatoria*. But this relationship between the two gods also lends itself to more serious implications: once again Lucretius and Augustus are involved. In the initial proem of *De rerum natura* the peace-bringing union between the god of war and the goddess of pleasure was a lofty symbol, rich in philosophical (Empedoclean) meanings. When Ovid takes up this union once again as his subject, and proposes a new pact of peace to Mars, he is renewing his claims on the great model for Latin didactic poetry. On the other hand, and at the same time, Venus and Mars play a central part in the religious and genealogical symbology of the Augustan regime. That role is authoritatively indicated by their presence in the figurative program of the Augustan Forum,³³ even if this is subjected to a certain amount of exegetical manipulation on Ovid's part: the narrator of the *Fasti* shows how close Venus and Mars are to each other in the new Forum in the words *Venus . . . utque solet, Marti continuata suo est* (4.130): adultery is what binds them together, and *continuata* is not just a simple allusion to the fact that March is "coupled" with April in the calendar. If we accept the normative language of Augustan religious symbolism, Mars and Venus have by now been drawn into an inescapable explanatory apparatus: they cooperate in the genesis of Rome and of Augustus, they represent and uphold complementary values, and they point toward the horizon of a cosmic concord. The divine couple creates a harmony between the strength of *virtus* and the pacific beauty of love.

But we have seen that the gods also have a part to play in Ovid's reflections on poetics. For him, Venus cannot be completely divorced from

32. On this proemium and on the function of Mars in the *Fasti*, I build on the study of Hinds 1992.

33. Zanker 1989.

elegy: in the proem to the third book, Mars presents similar problems, because he brings with him a reference to epic. The god who comes onto the scene as the patron of the month of March forces the poet to face the world of war (*bellice* is the first word of the third book); and in the literary system of the Augustan age (as part I shows) this is a real world apart, which cannot be separated from epic representation. While Venus has to rise upward from the low level of elegy, Mars has to move in the opposite direction. If he wants to find a place in the *Fasti* he must disarm, and thus abandon the field of heroic epic (3.1–2): *Bellice, depositis clipeo paulisper et hasta / Mars ades et nitidas casside solve comas* (“War-like Mars, put down your shield and spear a while, remove your helmet from your shining hair, and be with me”).

Ovid invites Mars to participate *inermis* (l. 8) in the illustration of his own month, and later on it will be clear that Mars obeys halfway: he puts down his helmet, but keeps his threatening spear in his hand (3.171–72). This partial disarming is not without meaning: Ovid is not the only Latin poet to pay attention to iconographical details of this kind.³⁴

The descent of Mars into the peaceful world of the *Fasti* is brought about by means of a narrative exordium. Ovid decides to attract him into the poem by using the story of his passion for the vestal Silvia. This story is universally famous, but Ovid has selected a combination of elements for which there is a clear parallel in the elegiac poetry of the Augustan age. Tibullus 2.5, an aetiological poem which bears several points of relevance to the poetics of the *Fasti*, also presented a beautiful vestal virgin, her sacrilegious violation, and the god of war who for a time lays down his arms (51–54):

te quoque iam video, Marti placitura sacerdos,
 Ilia, Vestales deseruisse focos
 concubitusque tuos furtim vittasque iacentes
 et cupidi ad ripas arma relicta dei.

And now I can envision you, priestess Ilia, destined to be loved by Mars,
 leaving the hearth of Vesta for a secret bed, the sacred ribbons loosed, the
 armor of the god, full of desire, flung upon the river's banks.

34. In the proemium of Lucretius, Venus has to inspire Mars with peace and erotic charm: love will put the *armipotens* (1.53) to rest: the poem is an epic, but without warfare. Statius, the author of an ultimately violent as well as self-reflexive epic (see Feeney 1991, 367–71), counters Lucretius with a Mars who does not put aside even a single piece of his panoply to embrace Venus (*Theb.* 3.291–96) and of course declines all invitations to pleasure and peace.

The whole story is prophesied by a Sybil who sets great store by her own eternal chastity (64), in striking contrast with Ilia/Silvia. Tibullus did little to attenuate the air of scandal surrounding the story. If the sensibility of Roman readers could be offended by the presence of an impure vestal in a key position in the Julian family tree, the details of Tibullus's description of the scene—with its use of strong words like *concubitus* and *furtim*, and its emphasis on the vestal fire and the sacred fillet thrown off—create a vivid sense of sinfulness. This sensational tone and the image of the arms abandoned by Mars are important cues for Ovid, as he too has taken on the task of producing an elegiac reduction of the nation's epic and mythological heritage. The disarming of Mars begins with Tibullus.³⁵

The opening of Ovid's narrative already hints at a potential scandal: *Silvia Vestalis—quid enim vetat inde moveri?* ("The Vestal Silvia—what's to keep me from starting here?").

There is something to be vetoed in the story (and *vetat* is a forceful word in this context). Yet the episode possesses suitable credentials for inclusion in a national poem. It is at the same time both transgressive and irreproachable. It is the story of the conception of Romulus, who is the origin and the archetype of the Roman people. Mars, however, is present in the narrative for once as a disarmed god, in keeping with the pacific and subepic atmosphere of the *Fasti*. This compromise appears to be perfect, but from a certain angle a worrying conflict can still be seen. The same episode was shown in high relief at the beginning of Ennius's *Annales*: from such a model it cannot but take on an illustrious epic patina. It is amusing, when one thinks of Ennius, to hear Ovid asking himself, "Why don't I take this as my starting point?" This is the true beginning of Roman history, and of the history of Roman epic. On the other hand, this event is also an exception. It may well represent, if only because of its opening position, Ennius's Roman epic, but it is also the only (or at least the only famous) erotic encounter in a poem that is renowned for its martial austerity. In the *Tristia* Ovid exploits this occasion to show the forgetful prince that even the most irreproachable texts can make some concessions to sex (2.259–60: on p. 26 we saw that the representation of the *Annales* in this light follows directly from the concept that the *Annales* is "Mars's poem").

Here too, in fact, the strategy of literary genres can be read in two

35. The elegy has been well studied: I select two interpretations where tensions and ideological conflicts are skillfully analyzed: Merklin 1970; Neumeister 1987, 157 ff.

ways. The god of armed epic must adapt himself somewhat if he wants to find room in the *Fasti*. But Ovid too apparently yields and comes to a compromise: here is a story guaranteed by Ennius's *Annales*, Mars's own poem (in which he occupies the roles of actor, of metonymic security for its warlike theme, and of great admirer of its author: see p. 25 above). But this concession of Ovid's is double-edged: the story, as he tells it, amounts to nothing better than the open-air rape of a vestal virgin, scarcely redeemed by the complicity of a miraculous and sensual dream. We can be sure—and the extant fragments enable comparisons to be made—that Ennius used a very different tone in narrating the same events. It is not even certain (as Otto Skutsch has pointed out) that Ennius's narrative went beyond the account of a mysterious dream, described in delicate tones that in some ways liken Ilia to Nausicaa.³⁶ Ovid on the contrary shows that if this myth is required reading (and how can it not be required, if it is the beginning of the history of Rome and the epic masterpiece on Rome? Without it there can be no Romulus, no Rome, and no Augustus), the reader must also accept its transgressive and anti-epic nature.

If we reconsider the connection between Venus and Mars outlined in the two proems, we can see that in both of them Ovid implicitly challenges the claims to play a role in heroic epic put forward by the deities he has invoked: *scis, dea . . . de vulnere* (4.5) tactfully recalls the wound received by the goddess Venus on the sole occasion (in the *Iliad*) that she attempted to take part in a battle (just as Ovid, like Mars in *Lucr.* 1.34, was wounded in Venus's own battles); and the exhortation to Mars to "lay down your arms following Pallas's example" is more pointed than it may seem, if we remember that in the *Iliad* Mars solemnly arms himself for battle but is brutally stripped and insultingly called a hysteric (15.128 ff.: "Madman, mazed of your wits, this is ruin! Your ears can listen still to reality, but your mind is gone and your discipline") by Pallas Athene herself.³⁷

If Venus is the mother of the Julians, Mars is the father of Romulus: Roman readers would not have been surprised to find a Romulan myth

36. Skutsch 1985, 194: the narrative of the dream, the only preserved section, makes it difficult to imagine how Ennius could possibly have narrated the rape. All is very uncertain, but the detailed account of the vision (fr. XXIX Sk.) looks like a device that forestalls the impact and the significance of the sexual scene, in order to make it anticlimactic, whatever the exact dramaturgy arranged by Ennius.

37. "Put down your spear, learn from Pallas" is a contradictory warning by example, since the name of Pallas was felt to be connected with the Greek for "balancing a spear" (Servius ad *Aen.* 1.39).

right at the beginning of Mars's month. But Ovid's choice privileges certain associations at the expense of others. On the first day of the first month of the city's first year—March, in fact—Romulus had won the first of a long series of military triumphs. In the Forum of Augustus Ovid's readers could see Romulus's statue, adorned with triumphal insignia, laden with the arms of an enemy leader killed in single combat, and placed at the head of the parade of national heroes: it bore in large letters the inscription: "Romulus son of Mars in the first year over the Caeninians, on the calends of March."³⁸ Ovid's *Fasti*, on the contrary, celebrates the calends of March with an attempt to disarm Mars.

The tensions exploited by Ovid are in a certain sense the natural products of the literary system, and I do not wish to maintain that they are immediately or inevitably aggravated when brought into the space of Augustan discourse. When the poet of the *Fasti* calls up the Venus of Ovid's *Amores* and the Mars of Ennius's *Annales*, readapts them, and suggests a combination of the two under the sign of Lucretius, he is only cutting up and rearranging the map of the literary genres. If the result is a less warlike Mars and a more disciplined Venus, why should we think of a conflict with Augustan propaganda?

THE CROSSING OF LITERARY GENRES: OLD AND NEW SOLUTIONS

These problems can be simplified by recourse to a well-known strategy, known as *Kreuzung der Gattungen*, the crossing of literary genres. Ovid (thus runs the familiar argument) is an Alexandrian poet. His manner of writing follows a tradition of interchange, of grafting and of hybridization between genres, and the poet's workshop is a part of the literary show; by now experimentalism has become the rule. I am afraid that this solution is rather too facile, and I intend to put forward two lines of objection to it.

First of all, this "crossing of genres"—this image drawn from nineteenth-century science, filtered through positivism, and applied to literature—can only supply a satisfactory definition of what happens in the "real" (if this is the exact word) workshop of the poet. The reader's task is to collaborate with the poet and to unearth the traces that this process

38. *Inscr. It.* 13.1.64–65, 532 (with J. Richardson 1991, 9). The iconography of Romulus in the new Forum is represented elsewhere in the *Fasti* (5.563–66). On the close involvement of Augustus and the selection of the elogia, see recently Frisch 1980; Luce 1990, 127 with n. 14.

of productive hybridization has left in the text. To interpret the text is simply to reconstruct its generative process. But if we look at the poems of *Fasti* 3 and 4 we find something very different. Ovid is not “using” differing literary genres to produce a new combination; he is “mentioning,” or quoting, the opposition between differing literary genres, and he is drawing our attention to the difficulty of creating a dialogue between them. The poet at work is not all that different from Venus: he has become one of the characters in his own fiction. The interplay between literary genres has come out of the workshop and moved onto the stage, and the effect is as ambiguous and shifting as a shadow play. It has always been a difficult question whether we should or should not believe in the existence of literary genres: in the case of Ovid, they are indispensable, but indispensable to the fiction, in the same way as Venus is, or as the voice of the poet is.

There is also a more general objection, which shows a possible transfer between the system of literary genres and ideology. Here too the concept of Alexandrian experimentalism may be inadequate. If we try to place the *Fasti* on a borderline between elegy and epic, we are faced with a paradox of no easy solution. In the Augustan Rome of Propertius and Virgil the two traditions were distinguished by a precise division of labor. The *Fasti* emerges as the literary heir—because its programmatic form demonstrates that it intends to be the heir—of two traditions, one of which is closely associated with the prince and his celebration, while the other (almost on principle) ignores the prince and his achievements.³⁹ This opposition is not so easy to reconcile as the others. Elegy had cultivated its own autonomous vision of the world by the very fact of having delegated to its opposite number, lofty poetry, the interests of Augustan discourse. There is no provision or space for an intermediate form: the division between the genres is of a political nature. A poet who deliberately presents such a contradiction cannot be labeled (on the basis of the *Kreuzung* catalogue) as an Alexandrian who happens to be writing a hymn in elegiac couplets or to be putting together a realistic idyll out of Homeric cuttings. Here the poet has taken on a far greater degree of responsibility for the form of his text.

39. For its radical simplicity, I recommend a formulation by Syme 1978, 182–90: he keeps an eye on the polarization of the Augustan literary system better than many literary historians do. They often incline to a sort of generational explanation which I find unconvincing. Lefèvre 1988 classifies the poets as “sons of the Republic” (Virgil), “sons of chaos” (Propertius), “sons of peace” (people who ignore *quantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*: Ovid). Should this determinism be valid, one would have to classify Lefèvre as a “son of prewar historicism.”

The reader who is prepared to take a fresh look, in this light, at Ovid's prayer at the beginning of the third book—*Mars ades*, but put down your arms first—will be in a position to note a striking coincidence. The *Fasti* contains—and this is an exceptional phenomenon in Ovid's poetry and perhaps in all Augustan poetry—a few words directly spoken by Augustus. For Ovid it is an unusual responsibility to make the prince speak. This happens, however, on an extremely important and duly solemn occasion: Augustus is addressing his patron god, Mars the Avenger (5.575): *Mars ades et satia scelerato sanguine ferrum!* ("be with me, Mars, glut my sword with the criminals' blood").⁴⁰

Invited into the pacific world of the *Fasti*, the prince's voice both repeats (*Mars ades*) the poet's prayer and contradicts its intention. And vice versa. If we pull too hard on these two threads in the fabric of the text, the whole compromise comes apart.

SMALL SACRIFICES AND GREAT FOUNDATIONS

In the fictional world of the Augustan poets the relationship between traditional epic and modern poetry is seen as a question of scale. On the one hand, the older and more familiar tradition inclines toward mountains, billowing sails, the open sea, rivers and torrents, broad highways, hundreds of tongues and thundering voices; on the other hand, the preference is for hills or plains, little boats and short-distance coastal sailing, limpid fountains and streams, untrodden paths, low-toned voices. This revision of the tradition has, in its turn, already become traditional by the time Ovid is composing his poem: the credit for it belongs above all to Propertius, who channels into his own poetic program a series of well-known images from Callimachus. Such images of the quest for novelty and for untrodden paths may even run the risk of becoming, in their turn, somewhat trite. When Ovid reaches the feast of the *Parentalia* in his poem, he offers an implicit example of this strategy:

est honor et tumulis, animas placare paternas,
parvae in exstructas munera ferre pyras.

Parva petunt manes: pietas pro divite grata est
munere: non avidos Styx habet ima deos.

(2.533–36)

40. The line provides Augustus with a style of his own, not aligned with the style of the elegiac narrator, featuring harsh sounds (sigmatism), archaic austerity (triple alliteration), and resonances of remote religious formulae like *satur fu, fere Mars* in the *carmen Arvale*, or the address *Mars, vigila* attested by Servius (ad *Aen.* 8.3). Augustus talks like a man from a different generation, maybe like a character from early Roman epos.

Tombs get tribute too: appeasing ancestral spirits, bringing small gifts to the pyres you've built. The dead make small demands. Devotion counts as much as a lavish gift; the spirits below aren't greedy.

The dead are not greedy: all they want are small and inexpensive things (537–39): modest flowers, wheat and a little salt, bread soaked in wine, violets:

Nec maiora veto, sed et his placabilis umbra est:
 adde preces positis et sua verba focis.
 Hunc morem Aeneas, pietatis idoneus auctor,
 attulit in terras, iuste Latine, tuas.
 Ille patris Genio sollemnia dona ferebat. . . .
 (2.541–45)

More is all right, but one can appease a ghost with just these. Set up a hearth and say the right prayers. Aeneas, appropriate paragon of devotion, brought your country this custom, fair-minded Latinus. That hero used to bring annual gifts to his father's spirit. . . .

Now the cause must be given: and thus the annual rite of the *Parentalia* is traced back to the model of the funeral rites in honor of Anchises: Aeneas has passed these rites on to the culture of Latium, Virgil has immortalized them in song. In his fifth book of the *Aeneid*, it is true, Virgil had not limited himself to the *parva* recommended by Ovid; there Aeneas makes a whole hecatomb (e.g., 101, *onerant aras mactantque iuencos*), and it is only natural that the solemnity of epic should require enormous expense, the consumption of *maiora* and not of *parva*. We are reminded that Propertius described his own poetry in the actual terms of a humble and economical sacrifice: *pauperibus sacris vilia tura damus* (2.10.24).⁴¹ His refusal to sing the prince's successes (2.10.4, *Romana mei dicere castra ducis*) is in perfect keeping with his Callimachean program of a "meagre" sacrifice. Now the *Fasti*, too, will obviously be presented as "meagre" and reduced poetry: Ovid traces his *Parentalia* back to Virgil's original in order to emphasize the difference in scale and ambition between the two poems. But the contrast here is not as simple as it was in Propertius: in the *Fasti* the great official themes cannot be postponed forever (cf. Prop. 2.10.8: "I'll sing of wars when I have finished writing about my mistress"). The customary division between celebratory song and small-scale art is no longer adequate, especially because

41. There are well-known Callimachean precedents: in the *Aitia* prologue (1.23 Pf.), Apollo contrasts "fat" sacrificial victims and "thin" poetry. An Augustan development of this polarization, based on sacrificial imagery, is for example Hor. *Carm.* 4.2.53–60.

the theme chosen by Ovid, the calendar, is far from neutral and does not lend itself to facile compromises. How can celebration be avoided when the theme of the poem is “the festivals of a state?”

Propertius had made experiments in “raising” his style in his fourth book, where he treats loftier and vaster themes such as Roman aetiologies. His prayer *Roma, fave, tibi surgit opus* (4.1.67) indicates in fact that his work is not only beginning but is at the same time *rising* in order to make itself fit for the nobility of its subject matter. There is an analogy with the idea of founding a city: the poet has just mentioned the growth of the Roman walls, and his project is *disponere versu* (4.1.57) the walls of Rome. The “small” poetry of the elegiac poet must grow in order to adapt itself to the growth of Rome, from humble origins to universal empire: it must not be forgotten that the prince has chosen a name for himself which is connected with the idea of “increase.” Ovid extends this idea. When his Romulus prays the gods to assist him in founding Rome he uses exactly the same formula: *hoc mihi surgat opus* (*Fasti* 4.830), and the same words are used by the poet to announce the growth of his poetic project (5.111): *Ab Iove surgat opus*. To narrate the story of Rome from its origins (its *Aetia*) is similar to the action of founding it. A poem that attempts to reconstruct the foundation of Rome is an experiment in bringing together small-scale origins and gigantic growth. In terms of the literary system, this presents a true paradox.

AUGUSTUS REWRITES ROME

In Ovid’s decision to write the *Fasti*, Augustus is involved not only as the predictable theme of the poem but also as its example. It is not just a metaphorical expression to say that Augustus is completing the rewriting of Rome—just as Propertius, more modestly, is “writing” his *puella*. The prince’s operation on Rome is so systematic and so total that the city is caught up in a sort of macrotext. Augustus rewrites everything, and at the same time writes himself into every aspect of the city’s life, both public and private:⁴² not only its constitutional system, its architecture, its images, its official language, and its religion, but also more unexpected

42. The bibliography is huge but see e.g. Millar 1984; Winkes 1985; Binder 1988; Fraschetti 1990a (urban space, communal time); Wallace-Hadrill 1986 (coins); *JRS* 75, 1985, 244 ff. (on two archaeological discoveries, the Horologium Augusti in the Campus Martius and the link between the house of Augustus and Apollo Palatinus); Zanker 1989 (political use of images and their impact). Studies like some of these are changing our perception of what has to be understood as “propaganda,” political discourse, shared imaginations.

and delicate aspects, such as its past history, its civil legislation, its way of measuring time and space, its fashions and its sexual behavior. A capillary network connects a number of decisions that were taken during the same years but which concern different fields, such as the rewriting of Rome's history, the portrayal of the prince on all the coinage, the production and public display of an official map of the entire Roman inhabited world, the capture of time in a solar clock connected through the zodiac with the prince himself, the insertion of the prince's name in ancient and incomprehensible religious formulae, the plans for a new Forum, and—what is naturally of particular interest to us in this context—the reworking of the calendar.

In Rome every new calendar is under the direct control of the ruling political power: so much so that it is almost meaningless to talk of a stable, official, state "text." The passage from text to practice is even more strictly regimented: the calendar is a sort of program, which can only become a reality, year by year, through the closely controlling action of the appointed authorities. In order to take place, many festivals must be publicly announced. But the novelty lies elsewhere: Augustus is inserting himself into the calendar, methodically and in different ways. On the one hand he fills it with scattered references both to himself and to his "double" Julius Caesar, and successively to the members of his family and to his probable heirs. On the other hand he exploits the political possibilities of genealogy more thoroughly—Ovid offers some interesting conclusions about this technique (see part II, chapter 4). The effect is almost revolutionary.

For centuries the calendar had offered a complex image, a sort of kaleidoscopic view of *Romanitas*. Certain anniversaries contributed to a certain view of the past. The agrarian festivals suggested a continuous line, bound to the cyclical movement of the seasons and its critical moments: but the progressive attribution of actual "messages" to these festivals was always the result of an operation, of an exegetical intervention.⁴³ Participation in the rituals does not seem to have entailed strategies of direct commemoration. Those who took part in the *Parilia* were free to believe (and perhaps most of them did incline toward a similar association of ideas) that the festival perpetuated an image of Rome's pastoral origins, and thus also of Romulus and his myth; however, the

43. Beard 1987; the Augustan manipulation of the calendar is not the focus of her paper.

idea of officially celebrating the city's "birthday" took shape over a very long time span, and it was only completely formulated in the imperial age. Above all, there was no suggestion in any type of program of any ideological continuity between the festivals, any sort of syntagmatic plan of the calendar. Each individual festival has its own strict rules regarding its ritual, but there is complete flexibility as far as associations and exegetical content are concerned. The set of festivals as a whole is not held to observe any conscious unitary plan, even of a merely implicit or optional nature. This open structuring of Roman time provides Ovid with an ideal subject on which to use the aetiological techniques learned from Callimachus; festivals that incorporate mythological options, arguable allusions, obscure survivals and relics open to interpretation. But in contrast with this layered, discontinuous, and associative world, Augustan discourse has given a new dimension to the calendar. Here the festivals are univocal, consciously planned, and interconnected: from the Augustan perspective the Roman year begins to take on the form of a continuous narrative, and every Augustan anniversary is a step on an ideological path that has been fixed once and for all. The kaleidoscope that was so attractive to the Callimachean poet—who can enjoy exploring the contradictions and ambiguities of calendrical exegesis—is now duplicated by a line of celebrative events which imposes the cycle of its *Historia Augusti* on everyone. For the Callimachean poet, this new state of the Roman calendar affords a constant combination, day after day and even within the same day, of liberty and of nightmares: the "achievements of the king" (*Aetia* fr. 1.3–4) can no longer be easily separated from the antique causes.

From the formal point of view, a distinction might still be made between official commentary and explanatory material. The latter may be public, like the stone semicircle of the Praenestine Fasti of the late Augustan period, but there are always some "mobile" and optional areas of the calendar left, where the poet can pitch his camp and carry out his excavations in comparative liberty. But the real distinction is between the Augustan dates and the traditional ones: the explanation for the Augustan dates is incorporated in the anniversary itself and is fixed, so that neither the poet nor the antiquarian can possibly manipulate it. Is the ancient *Parilia* a festival "because" the flocks must be purified or because the day recalls the original foundation of Rome by shepherds? The poet can linger over the ritual that requires people to jump over bonfires (we must suppose that he too was an active participant: 4.727, *certe ego*

transilui positas ter in ordine flammās) and then put forward no fewer than eight parallel causes for it, of which the eighth is the story of the foundation of Rome with the luckless Remus's leap over the walls and final burning. The poet's festival (and also the popular one, I believe) consists in the ritual plus all its possible exegetical and associative ramifications. It is no easy matter to produce this multiplication of the calendrical text if the starting point is, for example, "today is a festival because on this day Augustus received his first imperial salutation."⁴⁴

In terms of Roman culture, it is highly paradoxical to talk about a "definitive" calendar: even the one fixed by Augustus is open to alteration, at least where new anniversaries connected with the dynasty of the Caesars can be fitted into the traditional fabric. Yet we can see indications of a tendency toward stabilization, a process that is characteristic of the whole structure of Augustan discourse. During the years in which Verrius Flaccus was working on the calendar and its meanings, Augustus had already encouraged other rather similar initiatives.⁴⁵ Livy had rewritten the history of Rome from its origins to "our" days. Agrippa's map provided the citizens of Rome with a fixed and up-to-date picture of world political geography. The triumphal *Fasti* were revised, defined once and for all, encapsulated in a public inscription, and closed forever.⁴⁶ A standard official edition was apparently made of the interminable *Annales Maximi*.⁴⁷ We cannot of course confuse Ovid with Verrius Flaccus, but neither can we raise a barrier between these two simultaneous operations on the Roman calendar, nor build a wall around both

44. The typical formula for Augustan interventions on the calendar is *feriae ex s. c. quod eo die . . .* (e.g. Bömer 1957–58, 1:39); days which concern the prince are embedded in the most official section of the calendar, where the most important information is the distinction between public holidays and ordinary days, and then motivated in the "exegetic" section of the calendar so as to become memorable and tied to a fixed "causation."

The formula *s. c.* is a specific signifier of Augustan power: its ideological effect is a complex one, the suggestion being that the autonomy of decisions typical for this old institution survives through the unassailable decision of Augustus. As a result, the condition of perpetual crisis and disfunction of republican institutions is frozen and protracted—so that everybody cannot avoid being reminded that Someone Else is needed.

45. On the nexus between the poem, the prince, and the work of Verrius Flaccus, Wallace-Hadrill 1987, 227, is important.

46. Coarelli 1983–85, 2:269 ff., is fundamental.

47. According to the controversial theory of Frier 1979, 198: the "final edition" of the *Annales Maximi* would be the result of the Augustan intention to control in a systematic way the function and the archives of pontifices, as a parallel to (a) the *Fasti Capitolini*, (b) the *Acta Triumphalia*, and (c) the *elogia* in the Forum Augusti. One is struck by the scope and precision of this project: its unifying ideas are the almost corporeal unity of Roman history and the function of Augustan as a synthesis and definitive integration.

writers—the scholar and the poet—to protect them from the “political implications” of their work. Although it is true that Ovid’s motivation in treating his calendar is not so serious as that of the scholars who are rewriting Rome’s history, chronicles, liturgy, and public time for Augustus, it is also true (and no less important) that our poet is *simulating* this act of service and of public utility.

ORDER AND VARIATION

Literary historians tend to see the *Fasti* as the most Alexandrian work of the Augustan period. Let us begin to see why, starting from the most formal of considerations. Its combination of a large-scale overall dimension with short and independent individual sections gives an effect of structured variety that cannot but remind us of Callimachus. The very scale of the plan already establishes a connection: *Fasti* 1–6, with a total of almost 5,000 lines, is similar to modern estimates of the length of the four books of the *Aetia* (? 4,000–6,000 lines); on this basis, one can imagine that with all its twelve books the poem would have reached an almost perfect balance with the dimensions of the *Aeneid*. This tension between epic scale and brief format, between unified presentation and variable morphology, is clearly a lesson learned from Callimachus. Callimachus says that he was criticized for not knowing how to write a poem that was “unitary in many thousands of lines”: that does not mean that the *Aetia* is a short work, but rather indicates (rightly or wrongly) that it can be accused of not being a unitary text. This discussion takes place in the prologue of the *Aetia*, and it would be nonsense to think that Callimachus is recommending brevity for its own sake: his aim is to obtain the quality of brief compositions in large-scale works that almost rival epic, and it is by means of the open and nonunitary structure of his poem that he achieves this.

We shall soon see that there is a second level to this problem: Callimachus has another, more subtle lesson to teach, and the fragmentary state in which the *Aetia* has come down to us makes it difficult for us to appreciate how concrete it is. With the great variety of themes that it contains, the *Aetia* may strike the reader as a whimsical and unmethodical work, but this effect may be only one part of a more complex impact. It is possible to think that the poem’s capricious variety was balanced by other less obvious effects and motivations. By inducing ill-assorted stories to rub shoulders within the structure of the poetic text, the narrator

is inviting the reader to detect implicit relationships, analogies that do not immediately leap to the eye.⁴⁸ It is natural to think that this idea was clearer to Ovid than it is to us. After all, the *Metamorphoses* is a magnificent adaptation of the same technique: provocative variations and changes of genre tempt the reader to discover hidden unities, “figures in the carpet.” In the case of the *Fasti* too, then, the reader’s astonishment at the poem’s variety should be tempered by the meaningful echoes and motivations whose existence the syntagmatic form of the text allows him to suspect: this constitutes a powerful revaluation, typically Callimachean, of the reader’s active role.

But a basic difference between the two poems remains. It is one thing to compose a poem on the theme of the Roman year and another to make chains of “causes.” Unlike Callimachus, Ovid has an already familiar path to follow, a constant and unchangeable reference point. There is a continuous play on this “guarantee” in the poetics of the *Fasti*. The poem is firmly anchored to the real division of public time: on this point the poet cannot cheat—or is there perhaps some kind of trick in the very obviousness of the poem’s chronological structure? There are as many books as there are months, and each book comes to an end with its own month (e.g., 1.724; 2.863). The Praenestine *Fasti* were exhibited in this same format, with a table for each month. In counting the days, at a certain point Ovid says “there are as many of them as there are feet in my lines” (2.568). The poet sings about the “times” (1.1) of the year, and the rhythm of his narration must keep time with this extratextual requirement. Even astronomy seems to be projecting its own demands from on high on to the composition: the books in our possession, 1–6, January to June, end in fact with the summer solstice and are divided into two equal halves by the spring equinox; Ovid stresses the fact that now—in the center of his poetic hexad, just before the “halfway proem” to the fourth book—the days and nights are of equal length (3.878, *tempora nocturnis aequa diurna feres*).⁴⁹ The chronicle of the year is not a poetic exercise that can be free of outside conditions. Earlier Augustan poets would have been horrified by much less. The Augustan Virgil never accepted such a limiting theme. This *recusatio* had been a means to defend art from the claims of content, and in some ways the Roman year

48. There were remarkable advances for the structure of books 3–4, after a papyrological discovery and the interpretation by Parsons 1977. Note also Van Sickle 1980; Thomas 1983; and Krevans 1997.

49. Barchiesi 1991, 2, remarks that Ovid is appropriating and inverting the function of astronomy in Prop. 4.1.

weighs more heavily even than a Caesareid on the poet's imaginative freedom. The celebration of a war may be an uncongenial theme, but as a program it is less demanding than a series of national anniversaries. Our poet does not spare us that sense of external and referential pressure, of forced obedience to orders, so typical of certain didactic poetry. It is certainly not a program that Callimachus would have accepted. It is strange to see a poet like Ovid using such formulae as *iubeor* or *exigit ipse locus*: the poet almost seems to have fallen into a trap that he has deliberately set for himself. The critics who think they have discovered Ovid's hidden diary have an answer ready: this was an act of homage to Augustus.

But perhaps the trap has really been laid for careless readers, because this referential and didactic limitation in actual fact leads to arbitrary choice and lack of order. The poet makes use of the pressure exerted by the calendar to trigger contradictions; it is a falsely neutral background against which surprising divergences can be highlighted. The transitional formulae that I have recently quoted contain two examples of this polyphony.

Exigit ipse locus, raptus ut virginis edam (4.417) refers to the fact that "at this point" of the year and of the poem—11 and 12 April, the feast of the *Cerealia*—"it is inevitable" that the story of the rape of Persephone should be told. This statement already has a first level of complexity, since the narrative will immediately be introduced by a long description, a typical *descriptio loci* or *topothesia* (4.419 ff.). *Ipse locus* could thus be read in two ways: on the one hand as "this point of the calendar," and on the other as "this setting," the one that is about to be described. Either way, the reader may well ask himself if and how the story of Demeter and Persephone is really essential to the poet's task in writing about the *Cerealia*. Certainly the program of the *Fasti* could not omit the great feast dedicated to Ceres. But modern scholars are far from enthusiastic about this combination of the Roman festival with a long narrative digression: "The word shocking would hardly be too strong to qualify the oddness of this transition" between the *Cerealia* and the myth of Persephone.⁵⁰ In fact, if it were not for Ovid's emphatic statement, no one would feel the need for a long narrative discourse (more amply developed than any other in the whole poem) on an episode which has nothing to do with the ritual but concerns the myth, and as such has already been recounted (almost "by right") in that great mythographical

50. Bayet 1971, 105.

encyclopaedia, the *Metamorphoses*. *Exigit ipse locus* is just the kind of formula that a serious historian would use to motivate a digression: this is how Sallust introduces a local legend that is in danger of being forgotten, the aetiology of Philaenon Arae (*Iug.* 79.1): *sed quoniam in eas regiones . . . venimus . . . non indignum videtur . . . eam rem nos locus admonuit*. However, any reader of Ovid who believes that *exigit ipse locus* indicates the pressure of an official program must still come to terms with the following line (4.418): *plura recognosces, pauca docendus eris* ("much will be familiar, but you'll learn a few things"), in which *plura recognosces* subtly suggests that if the reader is already familiar with the *Metamorphoses* he will recognize most of Ceres' adventures, and will naturally appreciate any variations on this theme.⁵¹ Furthermore, *pauca docendus* alludes not only to the existence of a clearly visible parallel to the story in the Ovidian corpus (a parallel that is the main reason for the lavish reiteration of this narrative in the *Fasti*), but also to the self-evident departure from any didactic aim (*docendus*) in this entertaining mythological passage. It is as if the poet were telling us that this diegetical repetition has little or nothing to "teach" those who read the *Fasti* as an informative work on the calendar.

Less subtle, but even more amusing, is the contradiction in 6.651: *et iam Quinquatrus iubeor narrare minores* ("And now I am bidden to tell the story of the lesser Quinquatrus").

The *Quinquatrus minores* (which the prose sources, more accurately, refer to as *Quinquatrus minusculae*, but that phrase is impossible to fit into dactylic meter) was a popular festival with a carnival atmosphere. It was characterized by the provocative progress through the city streets of flute players dressed in peculiar long garments with a distinctly feminine look about them.⁵² There is no indication that any "Augustan" revival of this festival took place. However, a word like *iubeor* has the immediate effect of recalling a certain type of poetry "written to order" in the first Augustan generation. This is poetry of public importance, therefore: and the *Fasti* abounds in themes that would be relevant to this kind of discourse. A good example, as it happens, is story of the founding of the temple of Jupiter Invictus on the ides of June, mentioned in the line preceding this one (6.650): there is no more exalted deity in the pantheon of the official religion, and Ovid dismisses him hurriedly for the sole rea-

51. The transitional formula is even less innocent if we view it as an allusion to Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.107, as argued by Hinds 1987a, 39 ff., who also points out the important connection between *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*.

52. Plut. *Rom.* 55.

son that he feels obliged to sing about the *Quinquatrus minusculae*. It is not easy to demonstrate that there can be any public importance in this aetiological account, which concerns a sort of irreverent guild of flute players, whose clash with the state authorities ends up in the fumes of an alcoholic victory. Livy, who has a strong sense of hierarchy, is almost ashamed to mention this festival (9.30.5): *rem dictu parvam praeterirem, ni ad religionem visa esset pertinere* ("I would leave out this information, which sounds modest to relate, if I did not think that it had a certain religious significance"). Ovid's surprising use of *iubeor* has the ultimate effect of reminding us, as a result of its incongruity, that his relationship with the hierarchy is no longer in line with that of the *mollia iussa* of the past.⁵³

Thus the compulsory element that its "day by day" treatment of themes in a given order imposes on the composition of the poem is also a cover, deliberately fragile and transparent, for its claims to freedom of choice; a conflict of authority begins to take shape. We can see a clear parallel with the *Metamorphoses*, which adopts the structure of a universal chronicle, from the beginning of time to our own days, in order to affirm more effectively the narrator's control over his own power of selection. In the *Fasti* it is the linearity of the time of the year and in the *Metamorphoses* the development of universal history that provide the pretext of a fixed order that will be continually disturbed and frustrated.

It is true that the program of the *Fasti* may seem more compulsory and more restrictive. But from one point of view it guarantees poetic liberty. What other project could ensure the *licentia* to treat, in rapid succession, such a "contagious" sequence of arguments as the following examples: 21 April, the *Parilia*, the natal day of Rome, the ruler of the world; 22 April, the prostitutes celebrate Venus; 23 April, the *Vinalia*, which originated with Aeneas and Mezentius?

Many scholars are of the opinion that Ovid chose this formula because it was a good way to celebrate Augustus. Yet it must be admitted that as a formula it also entails rather different consequences: for example, it makes it quite natural for Augustus and the heroes of olden times to find themselves in rather unexpected company. It allows the poet of the calendar to play down his own responsibility in selecting and including his arguments. It encourages him to trespass creatively across the boundaries that divide different poetic genres, and it raises ques-

53. Thus Baldo 1989 shows the importance of the Virgilian idea of *haud mollia iussa*, as refracted from the *Georgics* to the Ovidian *Ars*.

tions about the preoccupation with *decorum* that Horace's *Ars Poetica* had made so central to late Augustan poetic theory. The poem's basic story line, the narrative account of the Roman year, can give rise to "knockout" effects whose entertaining incongruity would be difficult to imagine in any traditional genre of classical poetry. "The goddess said, 'There will be an avenger to exact justice for the slaughtered Crassus.' But meanwhile the violets are taken off the long-eared donkeys . . ." (6.468–69); the passing of time fuses together the disaster at Carrhae, Augustus's Parthian policy and the donkeys garlanded with flowers in honor of Vesta.

I would say that with this our reflection on the *Fasti* has moved a delicate step forward. We had begun by positing that the poem accepted, or rather displayed, its referential order above all in deference to its Alexandrian tendencies: a formal game where the calendar provides unity and objectivity as a means of contrast by which to exalt fantasy and discontinuity, *polyeideia* and *poikilia*. But we cannot easily draw a line between this contrast in formal requirements and a tension that also involves ideology and Augustan discourse. To accusations of any such intentions Ovid could have answered with a simple gesture: the calendar is there, it is not the poet who makes it like this or like that. In a way, the calendar itself is doing the writing, using the poet's hand. The poet depicts himself as a voice hurried on by the passing of time: ever new days are clamoring for the attention of the narrator who has chosen time (*tempora*) as his theme.

On the other hand, the paratactic form that the calendar imposes is of its own nature innocent—there is no intentional meaning in the sequence: no one can ask for an explanation if 21 April recalls the origins of Rome and 22 April the festival of the public prostitutes. (However, this form of narrative was not the most suitable choice for paying respect to Augustan discourse, a discourse whose nature is to integrate and direct, and whose aim is to standardize the various impulses of Roman identity.) We can understand the delusion of a scholar who has spent much of his time on studying the elusive architectural principles of the poem: "The compositional principles in the *Fasti* do not reach far below the surface of the text."⁵⁴

54. Braun 1981, 2368.

Syntagmatic Tensions

We have thus reached two provisional conclusions on ways of reading the *Fasti*, and they are only apparently contradictory. The formal model of the calendar invites the reader to what could be called a separative approach. The narrator in fact presents himself as one who is writing “day by day”: the reader must get into the habit of breaking the text up into pericopes and fragments. Callimachus’s poetic model suggests a more cohesive vision. Modern scholars of the *Aetia* have come to the conclusion that the way in which the aetiological pieces are assembled is intended to produce combinatory effects, and recent discoveries have provided some proof of such connections.¹ Actually these two suggestions to the reader work together in an interesting way: the order proposed by the structure of the *acta diurna* is only superficial, while the sequential juxtapositions within the poetic text give rise to reading effects which bring about a secondary, and deeper, motivation of this order or structure. As the process of reading destroys the primary order, it creates a new second order.

1. Transitions between different stories are preserved in a casual and scanty proportion, and the general plan of the poem is only partly secured, yet there is certainly room for new studies on structure and compositional technique (see now Krevans 1997). Disclosures about the beginning of book 3 (Parsons 1977) have been interesting enough to suggest a number of internal links and cross-references, and even similarities with the complex structures of Augustan books of poetry (Van Sickle 1980; Thomas 1983; see also Hopkinson 1988, 85).

The problem is to see if and how this tension can influence our way of interpreting the *Fasti*. It is only honest to give an immediate warning that this entails an initial decision on our part. If we decide, when we read the poem, to ignore the possibility of certain effects—which I would like to call “syntagmatic effects”—our findings will not greatly differ from a certain traditional picture. That kind of reading can easily produce an interpretation of the *Fasti* as a compromise that dissolves into discrete fragments: aetiology, comedy, praise of Augustus. . . .

On the other hand, research into the syntagmatic effects produced by the poetic text seems to be justified in the case of all the great Augustan poetic works. No one would any longer dream of reading the *Eclogues* or the *Georgics* without paying any attention to effects of this kind. Yet it is only recently that the study of the *Fasti* has taken a step in this direction. The almost exclusive credit for this must go to the patient and courageous work of Byron Harries, and the results can be divided into two phases.² First, through close readings of illustrative extracts, Harries has demonstrated that sequences of pieces, however different these may be in style and content, imply a close relationship of give-and-take. On this first level, what he has achieved is simply to prove what has always been peremptorily affirmed: the *Fasti* is a post-Callimachean poetic book.

COUNTEREFFECTS

The second step is more delicate. A continuous and interrelated reading of the poem would not only create an impression of unity out of multiplicity but would also produce a certain deconstructive effect, which is to be interpreted in ideological terms: Harries’ name for these moments of tension—“countereffects”—seems to me to be a useful term. Here is an answer to the questions that we asked ourselves several times in the preceding chapter: is there any intercommunication between the poem’s formal characteristics and its references to Augustan ideology, and is there a threshold beyond which formal criticism begins to be rather less formal?

I will admit straightaway that I am not entirely convinced by all Harries’ examples of “countereffects,” and it is important to understand why. Here is an example to which Harries appears to attribute some kind

2. The distinction is mine, and dictated by the needs of this summary; in his two papers on the *Fasti* (1989, 1991) Harries does not insulate a formalistic from a more or less ideological perspective. On the importance of linking form and ideology in this poem see further Hinds 1992.

of introductory value: it is the sequence of facts and days proposed in 2.119–48. This is an important passage for the political content of the poem, and in fact Ovid deliberately informs his reader (119–26) that at this particular point his elegiac program is coming up against an extremely difficult moment: the Augustan theme of this paragraph, dedicated to 5 February, is so lofty that it requires a Homeric voice, and the measure of the hexameter rather than that of the elegiac couplet. These worries on the poet's part are a tribute to the importance of the occasion to be celebrated: the anniversary of the day (in 2 C.E.) when the title *pater patriae* was conferred on Augustus by all the orders of the Roman people. It is in fact a crucial moment for the political discourse of the prince's regime: *pater patriae* is a title that reflects the increase in Augustus's power during the final years of his reign, and it puts the seal on a change that was both symbolic and real. From the point of view of modern historians, Ovid is right in raising the tone of his voice, and has made a good choice of this moment for an extended comparison between Augustus and Jove (father of gods and men, 131–32) and between Augustus and Romulus, the other *pater patriae* (133–40). What is interesting is that Ovid picks out almost all the aspects of Romulus that could upset or at least irritate the Augustan re-creation of the ideal of *pater patriae*—Romulus the autocrat, the fratricide, the rapist, the small-town imperialist—so that he can then insist on Augustus's superiority, point by point. I would say that this encomium of the prince oversteps the acceptable limits of Augustan rhetoric. First the hyperbole ought to build up the figure of Romulus as a great Roman, and then show Augustus as a still greater one; but here it runs the risk of destroying the image of Romulus, and Romulus is not just one of the many heroes of the past: he is the very symbolic foundation chosen by Augustan political discourse as the base on which to construct the idea of the prince as *pater patriae*. To diminish the figure of Romulus is not the best way of serving the Augustan cause.³

But this is not the angle that interests us now. We are not arguing about the utility of certain political sections of the *Fasti* to Augustan discourse;⁴ we are trying to understand whether contradictory effects can arise from the way in which different themes are placed side by side. The praise of Augustus is followed by a very brief astronomical section

3. In the preceding episode, the tale of Arion, we had met a seafaring poet threatened by the sword of a *gubernator* (2.99), someone who should rather care about steering the ship. Artists in Ovid are typically people who live dangerously.

4. On Romulus and Augustus see below, part II, chapter 5.

(145–46, joined onto 119–44 without any dividing mark) which concerns the sign of Aquarius, perfectly natural for the beginning of February. The constellation is identified (by means of a less obviously natural choice) with Ganymede (2.145, *puer Idaeus*), and there do not seem to be any independent astrological reasons why this heavenly image should figure on this particular day, 5 February, in synchrony with the Augustan agenda.

According to Harries,⁵ Ovid has forced his hand to obtain this sequence, and there is an aggressive overtone in the juxtaposition. The myth of Ganymede is the story of a youth who was only raised to the heavens because of a weakness on Jove's part. The father of the gods, who in the sublime register of the encomium had been compared with Augustus, is mentioned immediately afterward by virtue of his sexual foibles. And the paradigm of apotheosis that brings together Romulus, Julius Caesar, and prospectively also Augustus is undermined by this reference to a character who was rewarded with promotion to the heavens for such a different type of service.

This reading of the connection between the two aspects of 5 February is open to some objections. First of all, the poet does not make the explicit move of recalling Jove's passion: the reader must connect this idea with the vignette of Ganymede, then he must remember that seven lines earlier Jove had been mentioned as a heavenly god, and seven lines before that as *pater deum*, in parallel with Augustus's position on the earth. Though I for one have no difficulty in agreeing that such a measure of collaboration is required of the reader, there are other possible ways of filling in the parallel. One could imagine that Ganymede has been chosen to look down on the imperial event, and to sprinkle his nectar and rain (145 ff.), chiefly because he is a *Trojan* character, a blood relation of the Romans and of Caesar. Or else: let us admit that Jove is the link in the association, and let us see whether the placing of such a frivolous note in contact with a solemn panegyric is justifiable. This problem has a general importance, because we are not bound to think that political *laudes* and playfulness are mutually incompatible. The tradition of celebratory and courtly poetry must be examined without preconceived ideas. From another point of view, the allusion to Jove's pederastic love affairs in this context is not necessarily damaging. It is a manifestation of omnipotence to render a boy-toy immortal; Jove's desires cannot be bounded, and in fact the next episode of the *Fasti* (2.153 ff.) is the story of a nymph, Cal-

5. Harries 1989, 166–67.

listo, who is unable to escape from the predatory power of the *pater deum*.

We can find evidence for this connection between Jove's love affairs and the praises of the prince in a poem that was probably appreciated by Augustus. In a single poetic breath Horace brings together Jove, Augustus, Augustus's military campaigns, Jove's eagle, and Jove's passion for the beautiful boy: *Qualem ministrum fulminis alitem . . . expertus fidelem / Iuppiter in Ganymede flavo* (4.4.1–4). The rest of the ode manages to combine various levels of seriousness and characters as remote from one another as the cupbearer of the gods, Augustus, and Hannibal. If we measure Ovid's text against this standard, we are left without any proof of disrespect in its intentions or of antagonism in its effect.⁶

BACK TO HISTORY?

Arguments like Harries' are more than likely to arouse a strong reaction from those critics (and I foresee a considerable following of this trend among philologists too) who see themselves in some way as "new historicists" or at least "historicists by reflux." As a principle on which to exclude certain deconstructionist analyses of Augustan texts, they make use of the basic criterion of the "Augustan reader." This useful critical figure is the personification of what we think an ordinary reader of the time would have thought when confronted with a certain text. I apologize for this contorted definition; despite appearances, this criterion is simple to apply. If used with caution, it amounts to a sensible request that critics should back up their intuitions with more solid evidence, and in some way it fills the gap left by such unfashionable concepts as "intentionality" and "the writer's mentality." If it is used injudiciously, it amounts to a pair of presuppositions, which are (a) that an artist tends to give voice only to ideas shared by most of his countrymen; and especially (b) that most of his countrymen base their personal values on the official texts that are also available to us, for example, on Augustus's coins and inscriptions.

6. The first mention of Jupiter in the *Aeneid* is precisely a reference to the abduction of Ganymede and the sexual jealousy experienced by Juno (1.28): this is the ultimate cause of the Trojan War and thus also of the birth of Rome. This is a typical case where the widespread idea that Virgil works hard to morally "improve" the divine characters transmitted by Homeric epic proves to be a mirage. Virgil is not committed to whitewash immorality and fickleness from the representation of his epic gods. It is important not to yield, even half-consciously, to Christianizing views of Virgil.

This “Augustan reader” is symptomatic of a return to that historical view of texts that for many years was the habitual method of interpreting Augustan poetry. It has often been asserted in the past (and even still in the present) that those effects in Ovid’s poetry that may appear “offensive” to us can be neutralized and smoothed out if we simply accept certain conventions of courtierly discourse. The critic’s task is in fact that of “naturalizing” the text wherever it might produce uncensored and hostile effects (what we are beginning to call “countereffects”).

The triumph of Augustan discourse informs this modern debate, and not one side of it only. While it is evident that the “Augustan” interpreters are working “inside” the ideological system that they use to bring their explanations of the texts within the norm, and are thus perpetuating Augustus’s domination over literature, there are also good reasons to worry about those who hold opposite sympathies. The search for conflictual political messages is, in its turn, caught up in the discursive power system that it intends to oppose: “anti-Augustanism,” starting with its name, is a subspecies or variant of the dominant discourse, whose thought patterns, language, limits, and values it accepts.⁷ There is a double risk in attempting to prove that a certain artist is “against Augustus,” because on the one hand this type of explanation rests on the assumption of a certain model of political opposition without having demonstrated its accuracy—political historians themselves have difficulty in explaining what it meant to be “against Augustus,” and how these “antagonists” did actually think, in concrete terms—and on the other hand, worse still, it concedes to Augustan discourse that central position to which it aspired in the culture of its time. I am afraid there is no easy way of escaping from these two alternatives. Neither of the disputing parties can legitimately appeal to a “prejudice-free” analysis: without these preconceived judgments, there would no longer be any grounds for argument.

BACK TO FORM

It should now be clear why I do not want to propose any new “objective” grounds for analysis, but prefer to adopt right from the start a less linear method of reading. The errors of the past teach us that an ideological reading of Ovid’s poetry has few hopes of success if it resembles

7. Kennedy 1992 is a watershed in the discussion.

an inquiry into the poet's political opinions, while a "scientific and formal" analysis of his poetry, exclusive of all political speculations, is a choice that is itself already compromised with a strong political overtone and can lead to such predictable conclusions as "art for art's sake," disengagement, mannerism, and the decline of Latin literature. More complex and interesting perspectives are however possible. It is more promising (I do not wish to maintain that it is more objective) to ask certain questions about the "readability" of the *Fasti* than it is to rack one's brains about the political intentions of the individual passages; there is a greater likelihood of achieving a certain degree of agreement about the poem's formal characteristics than about its intrinsic political content. For example: Can we exclude the presence of a sort of "plot" in the poem—in the sense that we use the word "plot" when speaking of narrative? How can the *Fasti* be read? This is where Byron Harries' position seems particularly helpful, because it gives serious consideration to the most fundamental and most neglected formal aspect of the poem, its (dis)continuity. Is a text that is punctuated by gaps and crisscrossed with cuts in any way also a text that is open to insinuations, that is, innuendos?

This dimension of the text commands our interest because it corresponds with certain intuitive notions that are valid for any poetic text that we ingest by means of a continuous reading. The first, inevitable effect of this reading is the creation of a directional connection while we follow the course of the text in a compulsory sequence. Readers of classical times were perhaps particularly aware of the progressive movement of decoding as the acquisition of a linear meaning: their texts contained far fewer graphical aids than ours, and they must have been much more accustomed than we are to negotiating between interpretations and to evaluating connections and syntagms.

And continuity is no unimportant aspect in a poem whose subject is the passing of time (*tempora*, 1.1). Almost at the end of the existing text (6.771–73) the narrator of the Roman year reminds us that time regulates not only human life but also the acts of writing and of reading, as well as the content of this particular literary work: "Time flows past (*tempora labuntur*) and we grow old with the silent years, the days flee away with no check or hindrance. How quickly the festival of Fortuna has come round!" Days, months, and festivals invite us to make cultural divisions of time as we live it, but this division can only be seen against a background of continuity.

The *Fasti* is both continuous like time itself and discontinuous like the city's social timetable. The poem's narrative form is extremely discontinuous because of the variety of its themes, but it is also continuous because of the presence of a single narrating voice: the narrator frequently recalls that the passing of time affects him, too, and plays on the ambiguity that is intrinsic to every kind of diaristic writing: the passing of time is continuously carrying the narrating voice forward from one theme to another and is the motive force behind the rhythm of the narration, with its abrupt switches of argument, and consequently of tone and register. As the chronicles of the city of Rome flow past, the narrator, who is also a commentator, reassembles his information before our eyes: the calends of April call up Venus, because her moment has come, and in a little while we shall have to bid her farewell. . . .

In addition, segmented poetic texts have the property of falling into sequences that suggest some sort of motivation to their reader. It is difficult to believe that the *Fasti* is an exception to this tendency: Ovid, both as narrator and as poet, could not have been unaware of these syntagmatic effects—especially at the very time that he was composing the *Metamorphoses*, a work whose transitions and articulations, with their play on arbitrary/motivated connections, make up the very flesh and blood of the poetic act. If we set the problem in terms of intentionality, we shall always be faced with the difficult task of reconstructing the mentality of the author who makes the individual choices and directs the arrangement of the episodes; if on the contrary we start from the “reading effects” created by the form of the text's composition, we shall be in a position, if nothing else, to postpone more perplexing questions and to base our interpretation on verifiable experiences. The type of effect that we are interested in arises when two opposing reading conventions come into conflict: one that is based on careful attention to the sequential continuity of the text (the *Fasti* is a single poetic text) and one that sees the passage from one day to the next as neutral and casual (the *Fasti* is a calendar). The poem's ideal reader is one who allows himself to remain divided between these two contrasting approaches, and who appreciates the hazard that together they may produce unexpected, and even perhaps censurable, drifts or currents. I am not talking about a subversive cryptographic code, but of the text's power of raising questions in the reader's mind, and of suggesting ever new contradictions by its use of the “neutral” structure of the calendar.

“LIBERTY”

On reaching the ides of April, Ovid makes a brief diptych out of the anniversaries of two important buildings: the temple of Jove the Conqueror and the edifice that is generally known as *Atrium Libertatis* (4.621–24). The single short comment made by our narrator and guide is that *Libertas*, the state divinity to whom this public building is dedicated, is particularly congenial to the Roman people: *populo dignissima nostro* (623). However brief, this acknowledgment should not be passed over: *Libertas* is an ideological construct that is not overfavored by the Augustan political climate. Although the term is very versatile, even lending itself to appropriation on the part of the prince as *vindex Libertatis*, guarantor of liberty for the citizens of Rome, the history of *Libertas* is burdened with conflicts and deeply compromised with the battles of the civil wars. After being used as an instrument of agitation by all the warring factions, *Libertas* suffers a complete eclipse: significantly enough, her name is practically nonexistent in the persuasive language of Augustan coinage.⁸ The main reason for recalling this anniversary seems to lie rather in a reference to the uses made of the building, the *Atrium Libertatis*, in Augustan Rome: we know that Asinius Pollio had taken the innovative step of converting it into the first Roman public library, and perhaps he also intended it to be a sort of cultural center along Alexandrian lines. The poet Ovid, whose work is at this time already present in Pollio's library, has a valid professional motive for recalling the dedication of the *Atrium*.

The following day includes what at first sight looks like a meteorological annotation: 14 April is a risky day for going to sea and a bringer of bad weather—however, not even a hailstorm could prevent Octavian from mobilizing, on this particular day, the “armies of Mutina” (625–28). This brief historical note lays some stress on the reevocation of one of the more problematic moments of Octavian's career. None of the many official Augustan voices known to us seems to have an interest in recalling this period, which saw Octavian and his personal militia involved in a confused civil war, resulting in severe repercussions on the civilian population (here conjured up by “the armies of Mutina”) and in irresponsible switches of allegiance, which brought Octavian into alli-

8. On a well-known exception see Wirzubski 1957, 152–61; on the eclipse of *Libertas* in coins see Consigliere 1978.

ance with one of Caesar's assassins—to say nothing of the deaths, in unclear circumstances, of both the consuls in office that year. Ovid has added motives for remembering that period: we know that he was born during that difficult spring, and we know it because he himself, perhaps with a hint of mischief, informs us that he was born *cum cecidit fato consul uterque pari* (*Trist.* 4.10.6).⁹ In short, the very brevity of the reference both conceals and simultaneously signals the existence of a problem of tact: by means of an ambiguous move the narrator interrupts his discourse on Modena only to take it up again later, when, on 16 April, he recalls that this is the day on which Octavian was first saluted as *imperator*.¹⁰ We are not told what the *prospera bella* (676) were in which the prince gained his first military honors, and the reader has to make a retrospective connection: yes, Augustus became *imperator* in the very midst of a war of factions, in which the Senate vainly proposed and exhausted its slogan of *Libertas*.

This oscillating movement of the memory is typical of the way in which the civil wars were treated in retrospect: they are seen as an event that is both execrable and indispensable, that combines both guilt and expiation, and that both clouds and justifies the rise of the new regime. No Augustan poet can avoid this ambivalence. But Ovid offers his readers a clue to assist them in their interpretation: in the linear continuity of the text, the reminder of Mutina appears to be prefaced by the mention of *Libertas*. What seems to be worth remarking on is the fact that the qualification of *Libertas* as *populo dignissima nostro* is preceded by the words *ni fallor*. This "if I am not mistaken" refers of course to the accuracy of the date, and we know that the calendar poet is often afraid of making mistakes; but with a shade more emphasis it could also indicate that the poet is not too sure of what he is affirming. In a world that celebrates the anniversary of the battle of Mutina, can it be really true that *Libertas* corresponds perfectly with the situation of the Roman people? Or has there perhaps been a bit of a backsliding?

If we switch our attention from *Libertas* herself to the *Atrium Libertatis*, another connection may be suggested. Pollio appears to have made a very suitable decision in choosing this particular site for his library, for in this way the diffusion and protection of literature were placed under the sign of *Libertas* and its continuation. In this case the new develop-

9. As a result of those deaths, with some innovative procedure, Octavian was appointed consul.

10. 4.675–76; see below, pp. 131 ff.

ment that began with Ovid's banishment from Rome is even more unpalatable. In the *Tristia* we meet the personification of the book itself, the book of poems written in exile, which returns to Rome. Sad, hesitant, and lamed, the little book asks for the support of the reading public, and reveals a grave situation: *Libertas*, the divinity who has her home in the library, has not allowed the new volume to cross its threshold (3.1.70 ff.): the book is not "free" (an easy pun on the word *liber*), and maybe *Libertas* herself is not all that free anymore either. Ovid's works have also been banished, together with their author: the veto on their inclusion in a public library acts as an acid comment on the identity of its patron divinity, who is now behaving like a severe portress directed by precise orders from above.¹¹

Of course, we cannot be at all sure that these particular lines were composed during Ovid's exile: in the absence of any proof to the contrary, the interpreter of the *Fasti* must always suppose that the text in our possession is part of a first draft, written prior to Ovid's banishment from Rome. This introduces us to a new aspect of our problem, because there are cases where the existing text shows clear evidence of having been taken in hand during the years of exile. Often these interventions take the form of short insertions, and scholars tend to consider them in complete isolation from their context. In these cases too critics give little credit to the possible existence of "syntagmatic" effects: a late addition, they argue, is necessarily out of context. This deduction is not automatically valid: for the very reason that Ovid dedicated care to reworking it during his years of exile, the text in our possession deserves to be considered as a proper literary work, and not as a sort of rough draft reproduced in a "pirated copy." It is unthinkable that the only works able to communicate by means of contextual effects are those written at one single and continuous session.

CENSURA

It would be hard to deny a certain influence of the theme of exile on the curious account regarding the *Quinquatrus minores*: the story of a flute players' strike in archaic Rome and its consequences.¹² The flute players are punished by being "exiled" to Tivoli, and Ovid emphatically points out that "at that time" (6.665 ff.) Tivoli was considered a place of pun-

11. On *Libertas* as a concierge, note Marache 1958, 89; Due 1974, 65.

12. See above, p. 76.

ishment. We know that “nowadays,” on the contrary, Tivoli is a summer holiday resort: it is difficult for a contemporary of Ovid’s exile to read these lines without reflecting that a modern writer has been confined to much worse places.

Let us see if this insertion is as isolated as it seems. The explanation of the festival is introduced by Minerva, who lays down her arms (6.655, *posita . . . cuspidē dixit*):¹³ the goddess is thus involved in the aetiology of the pipers’ peaceful and musical festival. The whole thing begins when the flute players come into conflict with the Senate, and the art of the flute is dear to the goddess. Minerva recounts the causes of the ceremony—to which we shall return in a moment—and then adds a myth to explain that she herself was the inventor of the *tibia*, the flute. The goddess repeatedly uses the word *ars* (ll. 662, 701, 709) for this musical breakthrough and gives a suggestive description of her own role: “*sum tamen inventrix auctorque ego carminis huius*” (6.709). The person who for us readers of the *Fasti* could best define himself as *auctor . . . carminis huius*, the poet Ovid, describes flute music as a form of artistic activity that is both appropriate for funerals (660, *cantabat maestis tibia funeribus*; 668, *ducit supremos naenia nulla toros*) and imported from Greece (662, *Graiae . . . artis opus*). We are reminded that elegy too is a practice connected with funeral laments and with the music of the flute,¹⁴ as well as being an art learned from the Greeks. There is room for speculation as to whether Ovid sees a parallel between his own elegiac *ars* and that of the musicians. If so, there could be an added significance in the words used by Minerva to bid farewell to her art (“*Ars mihi non tanti est; valeas, mea tibia, dixi*”; 6.701), and the sad sequel in which Marsyas finds the abandoned flute, uses it with mastery, and then, *arte superbus*, is destroyed by an angry god. Ovid too is guilty of *Ars* and has been forced to repent for his elegiac *ars*.

At this point it becomes interesting to take a closer look at the story of the flute players, who come into conflict with the Roman authorities,

13. On implications of disarming, see above, pp. 64 ff.

14. On funeral lament and elegy, see e.g. Hinds 1987b, 103–4; on elegy and the flute, see Bowra 1970, 378.

Especially interesting is Prop. 2.30.13–18, a mysterious passage (perhaps indebted to models lost to us) which combines criticism of old-fashioned moralists fond of listening to their laws, praise of symposia and flutes—doubtless including elegy, as a part of a lifestyle linked to symposia and to *tibiae* (cf. Camps 1966, ad loc.; Cairns, 1971, 206 with n. 1)—and a rebuke of Athena for throwing away the instrument. The whole constellation of elements—and a shared programmatic reference to the choice of elegy—is found again in our passage.

are exiled, and are then brought back to Rome and obtain complete satisfaction for the humiliation undergone. The festival makes an institution of this recognition of their *ars*, which is put on stage at public expense. We seem to sense a remarkable accord between the poetic voice of the *Fasti* and that of an exiled poet, cut off from the Rome he is narrating.

But we had promised to keep an eye on the contexts and their effects. The day of the flute players is introduced by a colorless astronomical annotation: *nulla nota est veniente die, quam dicere possis* (6.649). Nothing to note: 12 June—the day that comes between the 13th of the *Quinquatrus* and the 11th, to which Ovid has just given detailed attention (6.473–648)—is an empty day. *Nota* has the clear meaning of “annotation, notable thing.” However, the term also has a quite common specialist meaning, connected with the functions of the censors: it is the mark of condemnation, the very punishment that it is a censor’s right to inflict.

This association of ideas shows its active side if we consider that line 649 bridges the gap between two highly eventful days, in which at least one common thread can be distinguished. This element of continuity is in fact supplied by the operation of censors. The flute players’ redress against the powers of repression is attributed to the enlightened and jovial decision of an ancient republican censor, who acts in opposition to the severity of his colleague in office (6.689–89, *ne forte notentur / contra collegae iussa venire sui*). Thus we have a censor who comes down on the side of *ars*: an art that thanks to him is restored to an honorable place in Rome and gives a new luster to songs with *verba iocosa* (cf. 692), playful and carefree words. This is a hopeful example, since Ovid, singer of frivolous songs, has been hit by an extended application (we do not know how legitimate) of Augustus’s powers of control over public morals, released like a thunderbolt against the *Ars amatoria*. The connection is relevant because the final part of the section dedicated to 11 June, the day that in the text of the *Fasti* immediately precedes the explanation of the *Quinquatrus*, is concerned with Augustus’s activity as the censor and chastiser of Roman customs. The prompt for this is given by the reference to a well-known building, the *porticus Liviae*, that was dedicated to the name of Augustus’s wife Livia on this very day, 11 June. After his account of the foundation of the building, which dates back to 7 B.C.E., Ovid adds a solemn warning: *disce tamen, veniens aetas . . .* (6.639). It is clear that this building, like many other Augustan works, carries a social message: and Ovid’s more affectionate readers feel a

slight shiver, because in an earlier work, the *Ars amatoria*, the poet had committed the indelicacy of recommending that very place to seducers as a good pick-up spot (A.A. 1.71–72). The word *disce* can for a moment look like an allusion to that mischievous intertext, which shares the immorality of a poem condemned and canceled-out by the prince: it belongs typically to the didactic register, and the *Ars* presents itself as a didactic poem. But Ovid, as the poet of the *Fasti*, has a more constructive aim in mind: he is going to explain how the *porticus* originated from an act of censorship on Augustus's part. The building carries a message not only in itself but also in what was pulled down to make room for it. Where the new building now stands, there used to be the palace of Vedius Pollio, a house that was far too opulent and ambitious. Augustus had it demolished—not on any political charge, *nullo sub crimine regni* (643: the comment is rather comic)—but in order to set an example of the reduction of luxury and excess. Augustus paid for this decision out of his own pocket, because he would have inherited the palace by Pollio's bequest: this, explains Ovid, is true censorship, because the best example that the prince can give is one that begins at home, by acting as a censor even to his own cost (and the text of the *Fasti* falls in line with this example, by censuring the improper use of the monument that had been proposed by the *Ars amatoria*).

This example makes a skillful play on the margins of uncertainty that surround Augustus's power: the prince has not officially filled the office of censor, but he has taken over its functions through a means that is powerful and dangerous because of its very vagueness, the *cura morum*. As Rome's effective perpetual censor, all homage is due to Augustus, and Ovid takes the opportunity to put right some of his sins of the past. But the reader who follows the linear sequence of the calendar is about to meet another censor, one who is less repressive and more favorable to artists: an old-fashioned, republican character, who rejects the iron fist and repatriates the exiles who had been cruelly treated by the authorities and who are universally popular for the *verba iocosa* they back up on the public stage. For the reader who has an ear for the switches in tone between the two consecutive passages, the destiny of the poet of the *Ars amatoria* resonates in the balance.

“AUGUSTUS”

If we make another slight shift in the focus of our inquiry, we can encounter more complex cases, in which a single context brings into si-

multaneous play questions regarding the arrangement of themes, the choice of "causes," and the traditional structure of the calendar. The ordering of themes and causes can obviously be attributed to formal choices on the part of the poet, but the sequence of the calendar too may be subject to manipulation and to tendentious handling. Although we shall investigate this combination of factors more thoroughly in the next chapter, a brief anticipation may be helpful here. The example we shall look at concerns what happens on (and around) a major Augustan celebration, the most Augustan anniversary of all: the adoption, which is recorded in the official calendars, of the name Augustus in 27 B.C.E.. This great name has a birthday of its own, and the narrator celebrates it with a magnificent passage of poetic praise (1.589–616) in which eulogistic elements are carefully fused with etymological variations: the title Augustus is analyzed as if it were the manifesto of the qualities of the great man who has both invented and adopted it.

This political section is placed between two passages that their common calendar reference makes us see as a pair: they are dedicated respectively to the first day (11 January: 1.465–586) and the second day (15 January: 1.617–36) of the festival for Carmentis. The Augustan anniversary (13 January) is thus flanked by two panels which are connected by a single celebration. While coupling together the two feasts of the *Carmentalia* Ovid also differentiates between them, because the first is centered on Carmentis's role as legendary prophetess, and the second on her role as tutelar goddess of childbirth. The poet concludes by considering her titles of *Porrima* and *Postverta* (1.633 ff.), of which he makes a learned antiquarian analysis. The resulting image of Carmentis is that of a goddess who looks both forward and backward (*porro* and *post*), an effective female counterpart to the two-faced Janus who had dominated the first part of the first book.

Thus Augustus finds himself sandwiched between Carmentis the prophetess and Carmentis the midwife. One would expect the sequence to be compulsory, but it has been obtained at the price of a small inaccuracy: in fact our most reliable sources prove that Octavian assumed the name of Augustus on a 16 January and not on a 13th. Without this piece of juggling, Ovid would have had to treat the name of Augustus in a space outside the "frame" of the *Carmentalia*. It is legitimate to suspect that this time shift is the result of some precise purpose—of a structural nature, for example, or perhaps one even more significant. Let us have a look at the contents of the different parts of what we can now justifiably call a compositional triptych. The central section begins with Octavian's

solemn renunciation of his exceptional powers—and this really did take place on a 13 January. But after hurrying over this important political ceremonial in a single line (1.589) the narrator deals at length with the new name assumed by the prince, thus superimposing on the 13th a reference that by rights belongs to the 16th. The merging of the two dates has certain consequences. This restitution of the Roman people's jurisdiction (1.589, *redditaque est omnis populo provincia nostro*) is an important moment in the political discourse of the Augustan "restoration," but Ovid only glances at it, and his narration both diminishes the spontaneity of the republican restoration and dwells on an act that has counteracting effects. After restoring the provinces and returning to the fold of the "republican tradition," Octavian—on the same fateful day, according to Ovid—assumes a title that no other Roman leader had ever used. The learned poet's exegesis insinuates itself delicately into the empty space between restoration and transformation, so typical of Augustan political discourse, and discovers the reasons for this ambivalence in the very name chosen by the prince. On the one hand, Ovid compares the title "Augustus" with the so-called *ex virtute* surnames that had been in use in the republican tradition: Africanus, Creticus, Germanicus . . . However, the last surname on the list is recent and is borne by two members of the ruling house (Drusus and Germanicus). This comparison lays emphasis on Caesar Augustus's position as in a certain way the culminating point of a long tradition of exceptional men. But the poet does not make a secret of the fact that Augustus "goes beyond" this dimension: even on the linguistic level this name contains a root of overreaching and hyperbole. An elegant logical sequence demonstrates how the new name oversteps all the great men of the Republic (603–8): there was once a *Great* who had met a *greater* still (Pompeius Magnus, Caesar), and a family with the name of *Maximus*: anyone who goes any *higher* reaches the sphere of the gods, and it is here, in company of *highest* Jove, that Augustus has found his name, on an honorific level that goes beyond the merely human.¹⁵ Ovid's etymological analysis weaves a whole set of connotations around "Augustus," the main ones deriving from the

15. The sequence is organized with the precision of a grammatical treatise: *Magnus* / more than *Magnus* (= Julius Caesar) / the *Fabii Maximi* (who are thus located, on the strength of the grammatical order, at the highest level available for "human" actors of Roman history: a bow to a distinguished friend of Ovid who has to live up to this demanding name) / Augustus besides *summus Iuppiter*. In the laudatory escalation there is a touch of inconsistency because Ovid, by choosing *summus* as the superlative reserved for Jupiter, skips a definition which would be even more obvious to any Roman reader, the official label *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus*. One is tempted to say that long before Augustus, the

words *augeo*—grow, increase (transitive and intransitive)—and from *augurium*—what is sacred, the augurs' temple cult (609–13). The choice of the name Augustus implies a sense of superhuman greatness, which is based on two principal references: the prince is an Increaser, in both the transitive and the intransitive senses, and he is Consecrated. His name is also, by anticipation, a prayer both for its bearer and for those who name and invoke him: "May Jove *increase* his empire and *increase* the length of his life!" (1.613). Apparently the assumption of this surname recalls the republican tradition of great men, but it simultaneously undermines that tradition's premises. The surnames derived from individual conquests and achievements were the signs of fierce rivalry among aristocrats. Augustus, however, cannot use the name of any one of his achievements, because there are no achievements that do not belong to him: he is above the victorious generals, who are nothing but a part of him, and who triumph on his behalf. Therefore his name, rather than being a consequence or result, is proleptic. The emperor-cult and the prayers for the prince's safety show that Augustus has "grown" beyond the limits of the Roman citizen and contains in himself the power to "increase" the empire.

But in going ahead we have almost forgotten the two side panels of the triptych, which consist of the *Carmentalia*. In the first and longer of the two, Ovid develops the theme of Carmenta's virtues as a prophetess,¹⁶ while in the second, his subject is Carmenta as the guardian of motherhood. These two concepts lead into two independent narrative amplifications. During her travels, Carmenta the prophetess meets Hercules, who defeats Cacus and founds the venerable cult connected with the *Ara Maxima*. The celebration of Carmenta the "midwife" calls up a curious incident in the history of the Republic. The matrons of Rome had decided to make a demonstration against the loss of an honorific privilege, the use of a special carriage (*carpentum*, which is presumed to derive from Carmenta), and as their form of protest they chose a sort of mass abortion. The Senate was forced to give them back the use of their carriages, so as not to be faced with a demographic disaster. In themselves the two stories have very little in common. In the first section, we are transported into the heroic pre-Roman world presented in the *Aeneid*. In the second, the tone becomes less solemn, and there is a hint

Fabii were already appropriating an epithet from official religion—but without thinking of receiving divine honors from the city.

16. On this aspect, see below, pp. 197 ff.

of mischief.¹⁷ But their interest for us lies in the perception that these two aetiologies, interconnected only by the name of Carmenta, take on a new meaning if we consider their syntagmatic position, bracketing the aetiology of "Augustus."

We have already seen how the poet of the *Fasti* extracts two essential elements from the prince's name: the concepts of increase (*augeo*) and of the sacred (*augurium*). The theme of increase is obviously echoed in the account of the rebellious matrons. The women choose not to "perpetuate" their husbands by bearing their children (622, *nulla prole novare viros*) and they resort to abortion, thus uprooting from their bodies something that is growing: *visceribus crescens excutiebat onus* (624). The Senate condemns this but can only yield. Abortion—one of the moral and material evils that the Augustan restoration is combating¹⁸—wins the battle for the very reason that it is capable of cutting off the increase of the Roman name at its roots. The victory of the women, who recover a right that the authorities had denied them, seems rather like a reaction against the growing control over the private sphere that the prince was aiming for. An awkward contrast is created between the "burden" that the matrons relieve themselves of (624, *excutiebat onus*) and the "burden" that the emperor and his successor must take on (616, *orbis onus*: the final words of the celebration of Augustus). It could be said that the prince's limitless increase is immediately confronted, in the sequence of the text of the *Fasti*, with a contradictory instance.

The theme of the sacred or divine is highly relevant to the figure of Hercules, who is the protagonist of the first section dedicated to the *Carmentalia*. The account of his victory over the monstrous bandit Cacus raises high expectations in the reader: after all, the same story was narrated by Virgil with an appreciable aura of mysticism and hero worship. Hercules' arrival in Latium is an *adventus dei*: for the first time, the soil of what will be Rome is trodden by a hero and savior who is about to become a god. The elimination of Cacus is one of the final achievements of a great man, son of Jove, who has already concluded his labors: a few more steps, and Rome will have her first heavenly protector. The cult of

17. At lines 628–29 Ovid attributes to *virgins* the cult of Carmenta, and in the following couplet he mentions the prohibition to bring to the temple leather objects, *scortea*. The adjective is tied to a noun, *scortum*, whose normal meaning in classical Latin is "whore."

18. At *Am.* 2.14.17–18 Ovid notes, not very tactfully, that if Venus had aborted Aeneas, there would have been devastating consequences. The issue of fertility under imperial protection is one of the central themes in the ideological program of the Horatian *Carmen Saeculare*, composed for a public commission.

the *Ara Maxima* reminds the Romans of Hercules' victory over the "bad guy" in defense of the "good guy," Evander, when Rome did not yet exist. Hercules' imminent apotheosis paves a way that will be followed, in different ways, by Aeneas, Romulus, Caesar, and the man whose name and immortal destiny Ovid is about to illustrate.

One might think that Hercules would be a perfect "type" for Augustus in the first book of the *Fasti*, in the same way as he was implied to be in the eighth book of the *Aeneid*. But Ovid makes his own implicit parallel end up in a sort of cul-de-sac. At first his account sounds like a standard mythological summary without any particular novelties, but it strikes an original note at the point when we are shown Hercules personally founding the cult of the *Ara Maxima* (1.581): *Constituitque sibi, quae maxima dicitur, Aram* ("and set up an altar for himself, called the Greatest").

The origin of the cult and ritual of the *Ara Maxima* is an unavoidable element in the narrative of Hercules and Cacus (even though a more natural place for this celebration would be around the ides of August rather than the ides of January).¹⁹ But other narrators, like Virgil, Livy, or Dionysus of Halicarnassus, tend to tone down their interpretation of the event.²⁰ An important element in this encounter between Hercules and Evander's proto-Romans is that it should provide the motive for a Hercules-cult, so that Rome can thus claim absolute priority in such a veneration. The origins of the *Ara* go back in fact to a point in time when Hercules is still a hero: the role of the prophetess Carmenta is significant because it proves that Hercules is a hero who is "on the increase" in the direction of the world of the gods. This ascensional movement has a great interest for Augustan readers: when Ovid speaks of Hercules' end in the *Metamorphoses*, he dwells on the transformation that makes him into an even greater figure, superhuman, purged of mortal dross through fire, "august" to the point of becoming a new god (9.262–72).²¹ However, most narrators of the Augustan age see the actual foundation of the *Ara* and of the cult as a process that was carried out by other people, motivated by their gratitude toward Hercules and their desire to commemorate the deeds of this near-god. After he has killed Cacus, Hercules purifies himself of bloodshed and makes a sacrifice, as one would normally expect, to Jove: Livy, Dionysus, and Diodorus stress Evander's

19. On this, admittedly speculative, positioning, see Sabbatucci 1988, 261.

20. Verg. *Aen.* 8.200–75; Livy 1.7.11 (cf. 9.34.18); Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.40; Diod. 4.21.1.

21. On Hercules and Augustus see also Barchiesi 1997.

personal initiative in adding a celebration of Hercules to this conventional sacrifice, which the hero accepts as an anticipatory sign of his exceptional destiny. Virgil gives a long account of the foundation myth, with a detailed description of the ritual for the anniversary of the *Ara Maxima*, but the words he uses to indicate the exact moment of its origin are curiously vague. Even though no long time can have passed since the facts he recalls, Evander speaks of a tradition jealously guarded by later generations (8.268, *minores*), and it is not clear who is the actual subject of the sentence to which Ovid's line corresponds very closely: *hanc Aram luco statuit, quae Maxima semper / nobis* (*Aen.* 8.271); *constituitque sibi, quae Maxima dicitur, Aram* (*Fasti* 1.581).

Virgil's "which will always be called" becomes a promise that is kept in Ovid. For the reader of the *Fasti*, in short, Hercules has founded a cult of *himself* in Rome: a procedure which appears to be unusual in the context of normal religious aetiologies. It almost takes us back to a surprising parallel instance, Ennius's euhemeristic Jove:²² this forward-looking mortal obtained hospitality from various peoples and convinced them to dedicate altars and sacrifices to him, and thus laid the foundation for his promotion to divine status. From a more realistic point of view, it suggests the way in which a contemporary witness might have seen the emperor-cult: a cult organized by the prince himself, in his own lifetime, both as a reflection of his own glory and as the grounds for his promotion to divine status (naturally through the medium of his subjects' collective gratitude for his achievements). Like Hercules before him, Augustus clearly occupies a key position between the divine and the human: but before Ovid no one had demonstrated so essentially and so explicitly that the common model adopted by these two men "on the increase" is a reflexive principle also in its grammatical sense, a fashioning of the self as the receptive object of a cult.

It is for reasons of this nature that I consider the panegyric voice in the *Fasti* worthy of attention. It is an unwise policy to insist too much on the question of "sincerity." The encomium must be considered as a specific language, subject to precise conditions but not necessarily devoid of informative value. By means of the hyperbolic passages that he dedicates to the name of Augustus, Ovid not only communicates an act of homage, which in all cases was unavoidable, but he also drops some extremely acute hints. In comparing "Augustus" with the *cognomina* of the past, he gives not only expression to a laudatory instance but also a cue for

22. Enn. Var. 116 V.²

analysis. The comparison with *Magnus*, *Maximus*, and *Summus* enables the reader to see *Augustus* as the apex of a movement of increase, which perpetuates and perfects a republican line of which it is the programmatic continuation; but this encomium also allows us to notice an important difference. Unlike other appellatives (such as Richard the Lionheart or Eric the Red), Augustus is a name that does not advertise any precise quality: its bearer, in fact, has no further need for this type of publicity. The name's effectiveness lies in the fact that it suggests a threshold, a point of departure from that human sphere in which labels like "Great" or "Greatest" can have any value, and where only marks of individual acts of glory and prestige can be handed down from father to son, not titles to universal rule. And if we read round the edges of the eulogy, we can find even more disturbing suggestions. The exaggeratedly faithful parallel with the figure of Hercules as model draws the reader's notice to the fracture that has been created in the religious system, just when the key word of the regime is "restoration." The Roman matrons' demonstration, with its near-arrest of the growth of the community, introduces a discordant note in the large-scale social control that accompanies "Augustus"'s expansion. The personal and subjective arrangement of the reminders, which is under the poet's direct control, sets a limit on the intrusive voice of the *laudandus* and transforms the text into a power struggle—implicit, to be sure, but still accessible to the reader.

TWO QUESTIONS OF METHOD

Our progress in this area has met with considerable difficulty, as if there were invisible forces resisting us at every step. Therefore, before going on to new arguments, I shall try to throw some light on two types of resistance, which can be outlined in general terms, and thus perhaps overcome.

At this point it is worth our while to reread the following passage by Brink on the subject of the compositional art of the Augustan poets:

Composition by, overtly, more or less unconnected paragraphs predominates in the kinds of Augustan poetry I have indicated. It is not of course the case that connexions are absent—how could they be?—but that they are not commonly found on the surface. Composition grows supple as a mature style, the classical style of Roman poetry (to use a now unfashionable term), is formed. Poetic unity becomes a feature informing a whole work from within as it were, by relation of themes and motifs, by placing, by tone, hints and echoes, rather than as a sequence of distinct and discrete entities, overtly demarcated and overtly connected. Classical composition of this kind . . . makes consid-

erable demands on the reader, especially since it is handled differently by different Augustans. Too little is as yet known about these differences, and the underlying similarities. . . . Comparison will sharpen our perception of the diversities as well as the similarities.²³

We are by now already familiar with all the main points of Brink's argument, namely composition by paragraphs, discontinuity, fluid recursivity, the importance of the arrangement of the themes and of the underlying relationships. Just as we are about to merge our own research into his work program, and compare the poetic strategy of the *Fasti* with that of Virgil, of Horace, and of Tibullus, we are brought up short by a remark on the preceding page: "Nor can it be said that the structural principles that appear to be valid for the short Augustan poems just mentioned commonly apply to Ovid's elegiac poems, where more often than not, unilinear progression takes the form of a sophisticated move from witty point to witty point." So that was what he intended by his "classical style of Roman poetry" (with the coy addition of "unfashionable"): it was to fix a demarcating line and a canon. The canonical poets (Virgil, Horace, the elegists) are universally studied in accordance with an implicit agreement, because they are masters of composition, and the surface of their works always covers a wealth of echoes and motives; critics can give free rein to all the musical metaphors that their culture places at their disposal. Beyond the pale of the canon, our conventional judgments (always implicitly present, however old-fashioned or "unfashionable") suggest that a different type of aesthetics prevails: poets like Ovid, Seneca, Lucan, and Statius are incapable of such formal control over their compositions, and it is a waste of time to look for effects of this sort. The concepts of "depth" and "unity" progressively disappear from the critics' minds and vocabulary after the death of Horace.

This is the first resistance. On the subject of "paragraphs" Brink offers us the occasion for a second observation. "Classical" composition, as he sees it with reference to Horace, is based on discontinuities, delineated with the collaboration of the reader, which subsequently reveal an underlying thread that produces an effect of continuity. In order to facilitate this dialectical type of reading, Brink prints his text of Horace with all the paragraph markers he considers necessary, and then illustrates the numerous internal references and the continuity of the arguments by means of notes. But a similar dialectic process can also be observed in

23. Brink 1982, 453.

the books of elegiac poetry, both within the individual elegies (Tibullus's poetry provides a typical example) and also perhaps in the overall context of the complete poetic books. These poets are fully conscious that they are using physical objects, books, as their means of communication, and they write in such a way as to exploit and assimilate the graphical conventions that regulate the act of reading.

As a generalization one might say that Augustan literary culture gives increased importance to divisions in order to show up continuities and echoes. The only manuscript of elegiac poetry to have come down to us from Augustan times, the papyrus of Cornelius Gallus found at Qaşr Ibrîm, teaches us this very lesson.²⁴ The papyrus has conserved three compositions, complete or partial, for us to read: a complete epigram (b), parts of a following text (c), and the last line of the preceding text (a). The compositions are neatly arranged, elegantly placed on the page, and separated by spaces and specifically applied marks of division. In the epigram (b), the composition that has remained intact, the elegiac poet declares that life will be sweet to him when Caesar has returned, for then he will be able to read the accounts of his military triumphs and the dedications affixed to the spoils of war. In epigram (c), the poet too enjoys a triumph, but this time it does not come from participating (by "reading") in military glories; it is because his Muses have "written" an elegiac poem that is at last worthy of the woman he loves. In terms of the poetics of elegy, this is the greatest of all victories, parallel to but separate from the glories of "Caesar." But we can read an even more precise connection between the final line of (a), *TRISTIA nequitia . . . Lycori tua*, and the initial hexameter of the political poem (b), *Fata mihi, Caesar, tum erunt mea DULCIA quom tu . . .* ("Sadness for your misbehavior, Lycoris *** Happy days because of your triumph, o Caesar . . ."). Though separated by the editorial mark, the two lines open a dialogue one with the other: the passage from sadness to happiness is strikingly complemented by the abrupt transference of the apostrophe, which in the space of a few words switches from an overdesirable actress to the new warlord. The author of these few lines, Cornelius Gallus, is himself a divided character, both political loyalist and love poet; this play of correspondences and discontinuities on the written page may

24. Anderson, Parsons, and Nisbet 1979, 129–31; Parsons offers an updating of present evidence about poem divisions. The problem will need reconsideration also because of a difficult, related area: the authority of our transmission regarding separations between elegies, especially in the notorious case of Propertius.

have helped him to impose a poetic order on his life, or rather to articulate the conflict between incompatible lifestyles. However this may be, the separation between the poems invites a reading that is at the same time continuous and conflictual. Although we have two independent texts, the intermediary “blank” acts almost as a challenge, suggesting the possibility of reading across it; at first this effect impinges only hesitantly on the reader, who then renegotiates it as his reading progresses. We know very little about the technical development of the *liber* in the Augustan period, but I think it is more than likely that the techniques of pagination and text division provided poets with a basis for new experiments in (dis)continuity.

A direct successor of Gallus, Propertius, opens an elegy in praise of Augustus by inviting his public to participate (4.6.1): *Sacra facit vates: sint ORA FAVENTIA sacris!* (“The priest/poet performs a ritual: may your mouths be propitious to the ritual!”). This invitation becomes particularly necessary if elegy 4.6 is seen as part of a macrotext, that is, the fourth book of Propertius, and not as an occasional poem destined for some sort of public performance, because the preceding elegy closed with another exhortation to its readers, who were told to hurl both stones and insults at the tomb of a squalid procuress (4.5.78): *mixtaque cum saxis addite VERBA MALA!* (“mix and add cursing words to the stones you throw!”).

The space between the two poems is an image of the poet’s capacity of self-transformation, from the attitude of aggressive slanderer to the pose of Augustan *vates*, and the reader, caught in the middle between *verba mala* and *ora faventia*, rightly pauses to meditate on this splitting of personality.²⁵ I could quote many other examples, from the classical Horace²⁶ to the “decadent” Ovid, in which poems that follow one an-

25. Many readers would be ready to take 4.6 as a praise loaded with a latent hostility: *addite verba mala* could be perceived as a gloss to this ambivalent reading.

26. A good point is made by Thomas 1983, 102 n. 60, dealing with the *Roman Odes*. On many examples where the last words of a lyric poem can be read as foil/anticipation/ implied comment if set in continuity with the next poem, see my entry “Sequenze” in the *Enciclopedia Oraziana* (Rome 1997). The lyric poetry of Horace is based on a tension between an “Alexandrian” sense of a written continuity, the book being the true contextual occasion, and the persistence of an ideal autonomy of individual poems, implying the traditional voice and the performative contexts of early Greek lyric. The two effects are inseparable and paradoxically complementary.

For Ovid, effects of hidden continuity can be observed in the books of exile poetry (as will be seen especially in the forthcoming commentary to *Tristia* 1 by Stephen Hinds): a kind of poetry that has been neglected for a long time, especially because there was no confidence in its formal and structural qualities.

Especially with a poet like Horace, the usual (and diametrically opposite) objection is

other consecutively in the order of the book make a play of continuous-seeming statements, with margins that match up one with the other and constantly challenge the reader.

In the case of the *Fasti*, as Michael Reeve has suggested to me,²⁷ certain tacit misunderstandings may have been encouraged by the modern habit of printing and reading the poem interspersed with typographical spaces and headings in block capitals, such as G VI KAL. MART.REGIF. N. or H VIII KAL. FEBR. C. This gives a fine epigraphical effect,²⁸ but can we be sure that it favors the type of reading for which this poem was composed? These headings enable the poem to be used as a standard calendar of ancient Rome, a temptation that was already reflected in the work's medieval reputation. This use of the poem is consonant with the interests of learned readers, who hope to recuperate the lost agenda by which classical Rome had been regulated for centuries. But this nostalgic documentary purpose cannot possibly coincide with the original function of Ovid's text.

FASTI AND "FASTI"

The idea of interpreting the poem as a *reconstruction* of the calendar could only occur to a reader who is by now in the position of an archaeologist sifting through the remains of an extinct culture.

Any Roman citizen only had to look around him to see city calendars and abbreviations displayed in public inscriptions. The oblique and suggestive locutions used by Ovid to indicate dates and the passage of time

that such a master of lyric could not possibly have modified his masterpieces—written in different times and occasions—to fit the book sequence: and if the texts were not written for their position in the book, the effects are not intentional, i.e. not existent at all. But the idea that great artists do not rewrite their texts is unsupported both by ancient theory (the autographs are not preserved—but intriguing references to “tablets” and “pads,” revisions and second thoughts, are) and by modern manuscript tradition. And once we prove that a poet is writing in the self-conscious atmosphere of a culture of the book, it makes little difference whether we think that he is conditioned in his writing by a project of compositional organization, or ready to adjust his pieces for their final positioning, or selecting the material with an eye on the shape of the collection: the three strategies were all available to Roman poets, and perhaps mutually cooperative.

27. For his published version of this insight see above, p. x n. 1. In the study of the *Fasti*, the old and often neglected principle that interpretation of a text is not to be separated from the process of its transmission and even from its material layout as a written artifact is of particular importance.

28. It would be rewarding to inquire how far the growing fortune of this text between the nineteenth and the twentieth century has been affected by enthusiastic reactions to new discoveries of inscriptional calendars.

("there lack as many days as the number of the Parcae," "when the chariot of the sun will have looked three times on the ides that it has left behind it"), and to avoid bureaucratic exactitude in alluding to the names of festivals, would be somewhat wasted if the poet had simply wanted to provide a compendium of notes and explicative symbols.²⁹ The poem has no intention of being confused with the *Fasti* from which it takes its title: right from the beginning Ovid carefully avoids breaking up his poetic narrative with too many dates (1.62, *ne seriem rerum scindere cogar*) and speaks of "painted calendars" (1.11, *pictos . . . fastos*) on which official commentaries are noted; more than once he reminds us that he is merely using the *Fasti* as his source (1.289, *ex ipsis licuit mihi dicere fastis*) or for consultation purposes (1.657, *ter quater evolvi signantes nomina fastos*). Only gradually does the poem reveal that its title is "*fasti*"—in fact this will only be stated explicitly outside the text itself, in *Tristia* 2.549. The division of the work into day-by-day sections tends to conceal its ambiguity in this sense, and to give its reader the impression of a sort of documentary and positivist instance behind it. The only way in which we can make good use of this graphical convention is by interpreting it as we normally do when reading the "classical" text of Horace, whose paragraph divisions have been attentively studied by modern editors; that is, by accepting the idea that the formal discontinuity of the text draws the reader's attention to its actual continuities and its overall patterns of echo and recall.

Although I do not want to put too much weight on these preliminary examples, I hope they will have served the purpose of demonstrating that we need not consider the arrangement of the events in the sequence of the poetic text as an inert and compulsory choice. If we accept this point of view, our way is open to the consideration of a further complication. The calendar, in fact, not only is the object of a strategy of linear and syntagmatic combination, but it also suggests a "vertical" axis in which selection, not combination, preponderates, a dimension that we could define, in a facile analogy with linguistics, as paradigmatic. If we accept the idea of the poet's formal responsibility for the continuity of the poem, we ought to admit that the axis of selection is no less capable of producing its own effects.

29. For parallel reasons it is not advisable to print the *Epistulae heroidum* with epistolary headings ("Hypsipyle to Jason") that would neutralize the deft and oblique strategies used by the author to provide such basic information while the letter unfolds its content.

Paradigmatic Effects

Let us now see what happens when associations (and conflicts) of ideas arise not through their linear contiguity in the narrative, and in the calendar, but through an operation of selection. We could call the source of these effects the paradigmatic axis of the calendar and of religious traditions. The calendar is deeply stratified in that the individual annual "slots," the days which are the poem's most obvious unit of measurement, can lend themselves to a plurality of alternative motivations and connotations. There are two main lines along which the poet can move in order to increase his freedom in creating combinations. First, a single event can be made to proliferate through multiplying its causes, explanatory accounts, or simple associations. Second, the day in question can give rise to a sort of competition between various occasions to be commemorated—festivals for the gods, anniversaries of public interest, monuments to be celebrated. Once again, this multiplicity brings into play the poet's formal responsibility, while at the same time it provides him with an alibi. Just as it is no fault of the poet's if the calendar juxtaposes potentially contradictory messages on contiguous dates (see part II, chapter 2), in the same way he cannot be held responsible for the accumulation of signifieds relating to a particular festival, often so many that it becomes difficult to provide it with any kind of unified image or explanation. A clear complicity can be seen between this paradigmatic proliferation and the Alexandrian poetics of the *Fasti*: as proposed by Callimachus, the aetiological poet's mission is to unearth motivations,

often conflictual and uncertain, in a venerable and antique past whose testimonies require interpretation. If he is to be a poet of causes, Ovid must necessarily tackle the problems and the alternatives that any kind of research about the past involves.

LOOKING FOR THE *LARES*

In some cases, the problem can be reversed: the antique cause may be more tangible than its relics. On the calends of May, the narrator encounters the ancient celebration of an altar, connected with the venerable tradition of the *Lares Praestites*. Right from the beginning, the very existence of this altar, the symbol of these amiable friends of the Roman people, seems fleeting and evanescent (5.131–32, 143–44):

sed multa vetustas
destruit: et saxo longa senecta nocet.
.
.
.
.
.
Bina gemellorum quaerebam signa deorum
viribus annosae facta caduca morae.

... old age destroys so many things; even stone is damaged by the process of aging. . . . I was trying to find the two images of the twin gods which the might of the passing years has collapsed.

And so the poet is forced to reverse his normal antiquarian procedure. Evanescence has stolen away the material evidence for these protective Lares, and therefore the narrator analyzes the cause and etymology of their cult in the absence of the monument that should represent it. The cause of the name *Praestites* “had been” (5.133) the idea that the Lares *praestant oculis omnia tuta suis* (134); that is, they watch over everyone’s safety with benign eyes, and in addition *stant pro nobis, praesunt moenibus Urbis, sunt praesentes auxiliumque ferunt*. The Lares’ ancient name, *Praestites*, at the very moment of being decomposed into the various *praestare*, *stare pro*, *praesesse*, and *praesentes*, recomposes a positive paradigm around itself. This plurality of etymologies destroys belief in a unique derivation (the “truth” of etymology) and at the same time, paradoxically, reconstructs it,¹ because all these paths lead back to an

1. In this respect it would be wrong to advocate a sharp division between “serious” antiquarian research and “playful” poetic etymology. Keeping competing variants in play is more characteristic of Alexandrian poetry than is the search for a definitive solution: but the same could be said about Roman antiquarian discourse (see e.g. Scheid 1992,

identical semantic field, in which the tutelary function of these gods is vouched for—these gods who have by now become unrecognizable. For the Lares, who once looked on Rome with protective eyes, are in fact extinct: they can only be spoken of in the past tense. Ovid's reader may wonder whether this natural process of wearing away is a good thing for the city. The emperor's frenetic program of reconstruction and restoration—which lends great significance to the poetic program of the *Fasti*—would make one expect a *pietas*-inspired intervention on behalf of these remains from the past as well: but the protection of the protective Lares does not appear to enter into this policy of conserving cultural assets. In other cases, the prince and his family are very active: the following section (in accordance with the principle of syntagmatic recall described in the previous chapter) commemorates Livia's rebuilding of an ancient temple of the Bona Dea, in conformity with Augustus's recommended principles of restoring antique monuments (5.156–57).

Meanwhile Ovid continues to produce causes for a festival of which there is no longer any material evidence. Why *did* the Lares have a dog at their feet? (5.137–38): *At canis ante pedes saxo fabricatus eodem / stabat: quae standi cum Lare causa fuit?*

The image of the dog that *ante pedes stabat* prolongs somewhat perversely the poet's play on the etymological refractions of the word *Praestites*. The question about the meaning of the image is immediately answered: the dog signifies the protection exercised by the Lares over crossroads, for the *Lares compitales* defend travelers from robbers.² It is all quite clear—or nearly—but the poet still cannot find the exact image he is looking for (5.143–46): *Bina gemellorum quaerebam signa deorum . . . mille Lares Geniumque ducis qui tradidit illos, / Urbs habet et vici numina terna colunt* ("Trying to find the two images of the twin gods . . . but the city has a thousand Lares with the Spirit of the Leader who restored them. Every parish worships this triad"). Here at last the

122 ff.). Endless antiquarian discussions about rival causes and etymologies are an important stepping-stone toward the new style of the *Fasti*.

So Ovid's main innovation is not a change in the paradigm of knowledge, but a specifically poetical development of this paradigm: that is, Ovid creates an interaction between learned etymological discussion and the poetic process of homophony. This way, homophony is recuperated as a research strategy, and wordplay establishes an exchange with the procedures of antiquarian debate. Important points are made by Porte 1985a; Miller 1992.

2. Readers are sensitive to the issue after May has been proclaimed the month of Maia, Mercury's mother. The god—who has personally contrived this onomaturgy—is invoked a few lines before our passage (5.104) as the patron of thieves.

truth emerges: "The *Lares Augusti*, whom the Romans of the *vici* venerated side by side with the *genius* of the living Augustus, have in Ovid's view effectively replaced the *Lares Praestites*." The disappearance of all traces of the protective deities of antiquity who once watched over the city gives rise to the creation of

an effective homology of cults; Ovid therefore passes on to the cults, which he considers to be equivalent and homologous, that in his own time have spontaneously imposed themselves on the urban territory. . . . Thus the transfer is effected: from the *Lares Praestites* he takes us to the *Lares Augusti*, and includes a forward reference to the celebration of the anniversary of the *Lares Augusti* in the month of August, the month that was called after the prince's own name.³

If we accept Augusto Frascchetti's idea of this homology, we can then refer to Danielle Porte's analysis of the aetiology of this particular day, and from there we can rapidly arrive at the following general principle: "Augustus's fondness for *prisca*, and his desire to restore moral principles in a corrupt society . . . influenced Ovid's choice and presentation of his aetiologies."⁴

I have, however, serious doubts about this last statement. If Ovid intended to emphasize "le goût d'Auguste pour les *prisca*," the example of the *Lares* was by no means the most suitable one to choose. Ovid is far from affirming the existence of an "effective homology" between the old cult and the new, nor does he say that the *Lares Augusti* "spontaneously impose themselves on the urban territory." This rhetoric of spontaneity, of material that autonomously offers itself to the poet and imposes a meaning on his work, is becoming quite an obsession among the chroniclers of Augustan ideology. "Without any external constriction the *Fasti* falls into line, on the basis of its theme, with Augustus's cultural policy, and was perhaps created in view of a high-level commission."⁵ When Ovid reaches the calends of May, his literal words are that he *has found no trace* of the twins who (together with their dog) watched over the city, and that instead he has found thousands of copies of a completely new image, a pair of twin gods together with their Augustus (cf. 5.143, *bina*; 146, *terna*). The impression of replacement and of surprise conveyed here amounts to a clear comment on the urban diffusion of an "image power" that has no precedent in Rome, and it is shown as a novelty by means of the poet's decision to present it as such: what we are reading is

3. Frascchetti 1990a, 37. 4. Porte 1985a, 107. 5. Kienast 1982, 249 (my italics).

an aetiological narrative, and the narrator is free to make use of the register either of permanence or of discontinuity. This new cult in the city area has not imposed itself spontaneously, and Ovid does not tell us anything of the kind: it is the prince in person who has consigned (145, *tradidit*) the new Lares—plus his own image—to the social operators responsible for the cult. In fact this cult offers an important contribution to various aspects of Augustus's policy (the monopolization of symbolism, the capillary diffusion of propaganda throughout the town, the recuperation of "antiquity," and control over the lower classes), but its calendar position should really coincide with its celebration during the month of August (a promise that the poet will not keep). The only valid motive for referring to this cult, which has been transmitted from on high, on the calends of May lies in the obsessive presence, in every district and at every street corner, of the *Lares Augusti*, who have replaced and obliterated the benign old Lares. But the poet does not devote a single word to tracing an eventual homology between the functions or the value of the two cults, or to demonstrating that Augustus is carrying on old religious traditions. The usual strategies of Augustan discourse would lead us to expect the accent to be placed on the aspects of continuity and restoration of the antique, but here, on the contrary, we are presented with the picture of a ten-year-old cult which has supplanted, by means of its novel and authoritarian images, a fragile survival of archaic Rome. Here the poet's antiquarian research is far from running parallel to the prince's initiatives: Augustan discourse is of hindrance rather than of help to the reconstruction of the antique, and the paradigm of the day gives rise to tension.⁶

We are so accustomed to the picture of Augustus as guardian and restorer of the past that we have difficulty in perceiving an alternative

6. There is also a reverse perspective. Separation between Augustan Rome and the search for antiquity is exactly what establishes "antiquity" as Ovid's theme; only this way he is able to recreate Callimachus's aetiological and archaeological stance. As Ovid was certainly able to see, the gap and the dislocation that divide Ptolemaic Egypt and Greek origins are the necessary precondition for Callimachean poetics (on "rupture" and "revival" as key words for an understanding of Alexandrian poetry, see Bing 1988).

But there is one important difference. Augustus is different from the Ptolemies because he aims at a self-representation of a direct heir to the past and defender of the past. In other words, *the ruler now occupies himself the link between past and present*, that is, the space that had been appropriated by the Alexandrian poet Callimachus. Now the Callimachean poetics of the *Fasti* faces a series of bifurcations, between continuity and rupture with the past, while the past is reconstructed and obliterated; and it becomes necessary to compete with the interventions (both conservative and revolutionary) of the prince on Roman culture.

image, which must have been just as clear to the eyes of his contemporaries: that of Augustus as the systematic destroyer of republican Rome. Moreover if Ovid's text continues to be interpreted in the terms that we have just quoted, this image is unlikely ever to emerge. Our use of language is far from neutral when we choose terms like "restoration" and "revival" to define Augustus's program, and then use these same terms to classify Ovid's or Propertius's fourth book.⁷ "Restoration" and "revival" are in themselves political messages, and this act of recuperation could also be interpreted as a transformation. If the language that we use lacks neutrality, so does that of contemporary witnesses.

REWRITING THE ORIGINS

There is a direct relationship between the difficulty of retracing what is original in Rome's history and the modernization that the city is undergoing. The demand for antiquarian reconstruction is a result of the very rapidity of the changes that are taking place. Augustus has presented an image of himself as a brake on the excesses of modernity and as a guarantor of the past. His role as the nation's restorer and archaeologist is exemplified by the attention he gives to the oldest religious cults. By means of a complex and gradual procedure of recuperation, rewriting, and correction, the prince places his own figure, as *pontifex* and member of all the most important priestly colleges, in a dramatically central position. This process is symbolically anticipated in one of the first honorific ceremonies which took place after the battle of Actium. The prince—naturally through the medium of the Senate—inserts his own name into the prehistoric text of the *carmen Saliare: nomen meum senatus consulto inclusum est in Saliare carmen* (*Mon. Anc.* 10). For the first time ever, this unprecedented textual manipulation appends the name of an individual Roman to a prayer to the gods that is so ancient and so mysterious that no one, not even the priests responsible for the cult, had been able to hand down an authorized interpretation of it. The insertion of Augustus into this hymn prepares the way for an integration of the Salian cult of Mars with the dawning emperor-cult, while it also projects the presence of the new guarantor of the cult backward in time, enabling it to become definitive.

We did say that no Roman had ever achieved a similar honor, but

7. Note e.g. the language used by Walsh 1963, 61.

Ovid reminds us of an exception in the faraway past. The *Fasti* devotes a long aetiological narrative (3.259–392) to the origins of the Salian cult. The causes of the *ancilia*, of the dance of the Salii, and of their hymn make up a legend whose protagonists are Jove and Numa. After a witty and learned verbal duel, the peace-loving king manages to tame Jove's thunderbolts; in exchange the god promises him a tangible *pignus imperii*, and down from the skies comes the sacred shield that Numa immediately names *ancile* (3.373–78). With his customary foresight, the king gives the honest and skilled craftsman Mamurius Veturius the commission to make eleven exact copies of the shield. The artist successfully completes his work—*claudit opus* (3.383)—and asks for an honorary reward. Numa has just created the college of the Salii and has composed the text of their rhythmical prayer (3.388, *ad certos verba canenda modos*). We must not underestimate the significance of this narrative for the poetic program of the *Fasti*. Numa is presented not only as an originator of the early usages that provide the poem with its subject matter, but also as a sort of forerunner of Ovid himself. He is the first Roman who shows both learning and ability as a poet: poetic ability as the author of the most ancient of all songs, and learning as an expert in etymologies and wordplay (the skills that won him the favor of Jove). The artist Mamurius forms a part of this picture of a process of civilization, which Ovid contrasts with the cultureless militarism of Romulus's times.

At this point in the story, as his reward the skilled Mamurius asks for his name to be written at the end of the Salian hymn: *nominaque extremo carmine mixta sonent* (3.390). This is an appropriate and worthy request for a proud artist: instead of signing his name on the shields, Mamurius wants it to be placed (in conformity with a typical ambition of poets, Ovid not excepted) as a seal on a poem that will enjoy eternal fame. This reward is similar to the gift of Vertumnus, whose statue Mamurius's expert hands have modeled, for the final lines of the poem that Propertius puts into the god's mouth (4.2.61–64) are dedicated to his sculptor. An implicit sense of fellowship identifies the Augustan poets with this rare example of a proto-Roman artist. Clearly Numa must have granted Mamurius's request, for the Salii still pronounce the words *mamuri veturi* at the end of their hymn (3.391–92), ensuring the survival of this name that is connected with the most venerable antiquity. This, at least, is one interpretation: Varro (*Ling.* 6.48) glossed the words *mamuri veturi* with an appropriate *memoriam veteram*. But there is no need to make a choice between the two glosses, for the *Fasti* shows that they can

coexist: *mamuri veturi* is quite simply the antique memory (*Fasti* 3.391, *operi . . . vetusto*) of Mamurius Veturius. . . .⁸ The form of the Salian hymn thus appears to be definitively closed, protected by the annual repetition of the rite and by its own obscurity. By no sign does the narrator betray his awareness that this untouchable text has, after all, been altered: a restorer of ancient cults has diminished the honor accorded to poor Mamurius by inserting his own name into the formulary composed by Numa. In place of the strategy of integration that is so typical of Augustan discourse, here we find a break between past and present.

ROMULUS SAYS GOOD-BYE

Tension can also be imposed on the recuperation of tradition by the use of a conflictual paradigm. This can be seen when a single festive "slot" is occupied by more than one commemoration. If the poet chooses to mention the alternatives (not a compulsory choice in itself, considering the selectivity with which Ovid usually works), strange combinations can arise. The calendar offers a classic example of a double festival for 17 February. This day, Varro informs us, is sacred to the god Quirinus, but in addition to the more famous *Quirinalia* it entails a feast "of those who have not celebrated their own baking festival." In this second significance, which is completely independent of the first in Roman exegetic tradition, this day is also called *feriae stultorum*, because *stultus* was the definition for any person who had omitted to celebrate the *Fornacalia* on the day established by the *curia* to which he belonged.⁹ Ovid considers both these functions of the day, and divides his explanation into two juxtaposed causes (2.511–14):

templa deo fiunt: collis quoque dictus ab illo est,
et referunt certi sacra paterna dies.
Lux quoque cur eadem Stultorum festa vocetur
accipe: parva quidem causa, sed apta subest.

A temple was built for the god, and a hill was named after him. Our father's cult is renewed every year. Here's why the same day is also the "Feast of Fools." Listen. The reason is trivial but it fits.

8. On this technique of merging etymologies see above, n. 1.

9. The references are simultaneous in Varro *Ling.* 6.13, *Quirinalia*, a *Quirino*; *quod ei deo feriae, et eorum hominum qui Fornacalibus suis non fuerunt feriat*; on the normal interpretation of *stultorum feriae*, cf. Fest. p. 304 L.

From the point of view of a religious historian and antiquary, Le Bonniec is right in commenting: "The poet does not set himself the problem of a possible relationship between two festivals celebrated on the same day."¹⁰ There is no connection between *feriae stultorum* and *Quirinalia*, nor, as Ovid indicates, are they comparable in importance. However, as we have already noted, the fragmentary nature of its subject matter must not lead us to forget that the *Fasti* is a continuous poetic text, in which narrative contiguity itself acts as a challenge to the reader. We cannot rule out the possibility of an invitation, even if only a momentary one, to the reader to draw certain lines of interaction while he follows, step by step, the linear sequence of the text. The *Fasti* represents a calendar, but the poem is not composed in the same way as a calendar: there are no barriers or paratextual signals (or even conventions) to preclude any type of contact between its consecutive "items."

Understandably, these two festivals belong to different cultural registers: the *Quirinalia*, mentioned first, is far more important as a festival and is benefited by an authoritative paradigmatic association, even if the question of Quirinus's identity (Roman religion is well known for offering considerable interpretative freedom to its practitioners) remains unsettled. For Ovid, and for many of his Roman contemporaries, the cult of Quirinus is closely connected with the deification of Romulus. In the republican period, this connection was the subject of heated debate. The identification between Romulus and Quirinus is a relatively late process, subjected to political interests and pressures.¹¹ The deification of the founder of Rome is extremely pertinent to the relationship between the political and the sacred spheres, and becomes an ever more topical theme when a definition is required for that particular status, between the divine and the human, that belongs both to Caesar and to Augustus. Modern scholars are prepared to posit subtle shades and distinctions between various degrees of apotheosis and ruler-cult, and certainly differentiated languages do exist to represent these variations: but the Romans too are aware of difficulties and contradictions in this field. One crucial point is that no evidence has ever been found for any kind of Romulus-cult. Thus the figure and status of Romulus remain floating in a problematic limbo,

10. Le Bonniec 1990, 41.

11. The bibliography is huge, but note, especially on political uses of Romulus-Quirinus, Classen 1962; Burkert 1962, 363 ff. On the Augustan age, specific analyses by Gagé 1930; Alföldi 1951. For an updating, especially on literary sources, Jocelyn 1988 and Marpicati 1991 are useful.

until decisive pressure from the Julian family authorizes his fusion with a god who is equally difficult to define, *Quirinus*. In recognition of this synthesis Octavian seriously considered adopting the name *Quirinus*.¹²

Ovid carries this line further than any other writer has done before him: Romulus *is* Quirinus, and the Quirinus celebrated on 17 February is no other than Romulus: *Quirino. / Qui tenet hoc nomen, Romulus ante fuit*. This confident identification covers up its own recent and disputed origins. In order to confirm it the poet lines up a series of already traditional etymologies (but discards one risky one: *Koiranos* = "lord, tyrant"): Quirinus is derived from *curis*, "spear," from *Quirites* (which is thus left hanging in the air, without a root), and from the annexation of Cures. But a more attractive etymology, for modern readers at least, is suggested indirectly, by that very coincidence, completely fortuitous, that links the festival of Quirinus with the *Fornacalia*, a festival organized on the basis of the *curiae* (this key word appears in ll. 527, 530, 531). The possibility of Quirinus's being a god of the *curiae* would once again invalidate any idea that this name might be a title for Romulus. As for the hypothesis that the new god might take his name from *Quirites*, this is supported by line 505, where Romulus calls his people *Quirites*, but is contradicted in 4.855, where the Romans are defined as *nondum facti* . . . *Quirites*, evidently because there has not yet been a Quirinus to give them his name . . . only to receive the selfsame name back from them. All this is bound up with a certain strategy of antiquarian controversy that pervades the *Fasti* (and that is also to be found in prose tracts in the Varroian tradition): but the point I want to insist on is that the case of Quirinus is particularly interesting because this etymological diffraction takes place on ground that is already shaky.

Ovid's etymological strategy opens up the first holes in the credibility of the deification story. According to the version most often found in the "senatorial" Cicero, Romulus was killed, actually torn to pieces, by the senators to put a stop to his irrational despotism, and to avoid the unpopularity of this action they "discovered" a witness to attest to his ascent into the heavens. A miracle as a cover for an act of regicide. Ovid is familiar with this iconoclastic version, and his own narrative, while attacking it, also arouses its ironical opposition by testing its aggressive elements. Romulus disappears while he is administering justice (2.492): *forte tuis illic, Romule, iura dabas*.

12. References in Nisbet and Hubbard 1970 on Hor. *Carm.* 1.2.46, 1.2.50; however, they are ready to accept a very early date for the Quirinus-Romulus equivalence.

This apostrophe is neither casual nor neutral. The narrator's subject is the *Quirinalia*, and an unvarying convention in the *Fasti* is that the god honored by the festival should be listening to the lines that concern him. In short, if Romulus is Quirinus, the final part of his biography is a potentially dangerous discourse, and its narration must be carefully negotiated with the authority of the ruler-god. *Fortē* is the narrative marker that signals the miracle that is about to happen, but if this word is connected with *iura dabas* the result is a daring reference to the theory that Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 2.56.3) considered most probable: the murder of Romulus was motivated by "his cruelty in punishing crimes . . . and the merciless, arbitrary, and tyrannical, rather than regal, nature of his power"; in this light, *forte iura dabas* sounds very like "you were administering justice haphazardly."¹³ The ascent to the heavens is preceded, with due solemnity, by a divine interlude. Mars, as advocate for this apotheosis, can do no better (as he did in *Met.* 14.814) than to quote verbatim a line from Ennius's *Annales*, in which Jove had promised to make Romulus divine. The amusing consequences of this are, first, Mars's demonstration that he has got off by heart a text mainly dedicated to himself,¹⁴ and second, the narrative's dependence on its derivation from mythological epic for credibility. Mars shows his unsentimental nature by his callous reference, which is both militaristic and archaic in style (485: *intercidit alter*, "the other twin is no longer in question"), to the death of Remus: evidently the model of Castor and Pollux, loving brothers who were deified as a pair, is not considered relevant. The god Romulus-Quirinus, if he is listening, need not worry.

The whole account of Romulus's elevation to the skies¹⁵ places emphasis on the problem of credibility. The senators are accused of a *false* homicide, and perhaps this version of the story might have become the accepted one (498), when a providential actor arrives on the scene: traveling from Alba, he sees before him, by the light of a resplendent moon,

13. At *Met.* 14.823 Romulus is abducted to the skies while administering *non regia iura*, which looks like standard praise, but note Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.56.3: it was necessary to get rid of him, since he was acting "not like a king, more like a tyrant."

14. See above, p. 25.

15. *Fasti* 2.496, *fit fuga: rex patriis astra petebat equis* looks like a dim recollection of Horace's version, *Carm.* 3.3.16, *Quirinus / Martis equis Acheronta fugit*, a text that has often been considered an Ennian echo. *Patris* is illogically taken up by *patres* (the Patricians) in the following line, then by *patrias artes* (508) and *sacra paterna* (512). The whole narrative has a punning substructure: the plot explains how Romulus became a father of the Romans thanks to his father Mars, was recognized as such by the *patres* (patricians), and defined a model for Augustus to become a *pater patriae* by the vote of the *patres* (Senate).

Romulus-Quirinus, who informs him that he has become a god. As we shall soon see, this announcement is a very significant element in Ovid's narrative. But meanwhile we can detect a certain tension already latent in this version of the story. Dionysius treats the death of Romulus as one alternative among numerous contrasting accounts (*Ant. Rom.* 2.56.2–5), and immediately defines the story of his miraculous disappearance as “more fantastic” and that of his political murder as “more realistic.” Livy, who must proceed with greater caution, offers a version of the apotheosis in antique style, full of solemn echoes of Ennius; he then briefly introduces the risky variant almost as if putting it between brackets (1.16.4: *fuisse credo tum quoque aliquos, qui . . . arguerent . . . ; manavit enim haec quoque, sed perobscura fama*), and immediately passes on to the decisive fact that a reliable authority (1.16.5: *gravis, ut traditur, quamvis magnae rei auctor*) publicly testified to the version that thanks to this sole witness is still accepted.¹⁶ Livy is certainly not unaware of the potential conflict that Romulus's end could arouse: the uneasiness of the plebeians and of the army is highlighted in 1.16.8, where it is successfully quelled by Proculus's testimony. But Ovid's selection and arrangement of the events of the story place Proculus even more in the limelight: on the one hand the “murder” version of the story is rejected as false, with a confidence that not even Livy shows, but on the other hand the whole responsibility for the credibility of the apotheosis is shifted on to Proculus's *iussa verba*. Effectively Ovid has composed an even more official version, but has carried its credibility to breaking point.

The first real guarantor of Romulus's ascent to Olympus (but not of his transformation into Quirinus, however)¹⁷ was Ennius, and the reader of the *Fasti* has good reason to remember this. Romulus reappears as divinely *pulcher* (in accordance with an epithet used for him by Ennius, *Ann.* 75 Sk.). He appears at night but—Ovid specifies—the visibility was perfect (“there was no need for torches,” l. 500; Livy's version, less sensational, spoke of “the first light of day,” 1.16.6). In Romulus's ex-

16. The brevity of my reference to Livy could be misleading: I do not consider Livy as a mouthpiece of a monolithic Augustan propaganda. If a similar impression arises, it is probably unavoidable, insofar as Livy is used as a foil for the interpretation of Ovid: but should I focus on the Livian text per se, I would certainly agree that it is a conflictual narrative, marked by hesitations and ironies (a good analysis is Weeber 1984).

17. Against the controversial suggestion of attributing to Ennius the story of Romulus-Quirinus and even Iulius Proculus, cf. the thorough discussion of Jocelyn 1988. If we discard the possibility of an Ennian reference, Wissowa's arguments for a late genesis of the story could be resurrected, but there is still room for doubt as far as the archaeological evidence is concerned (note e.g. Ampolo 1988, xxii and n.).

hortation to the Romans (505–6, *prohibe lugere Quirites / nec violent lacrimis numina nostra suis*) the words “no tears” may recall, both in content and style, those that the proud Ennius had written for himself, his auto-epitaph (*Var.* 17 ff. V.²): *nemo me lacrumis decoret nec funera fletu / faxit* (“no one should honor me with tears nor celebrate my funeral with laments”).

Like Ennius and even more than Ennius, Romulus has gained the prize of immortality. This old-fashioned effect is consistent not only with the venerable antiquity to which the story lays claim, but also with the content of Romulus’s message to the Romans (2.508): *et patrias artes militiamque colant!* (“Let them practice their fathers’ arts and warfare!”)

One must admit that this vocation sounds somewhat limiting for Roman culture—above all for the culture that Ovid depicts in the *Fasti* and of which the *Fasti* is a product. Plutarch’s Romulus shows a more accommodating attitude toward culture when he recommends to his descendants (*Rom.* 28.10) not only militarism but also *σωφροσύνη*. We have come back in the direction of Livy’s Romulus: *rem militarem colant sciantque et ita posteris tradant nullas opes humanas armis Romanis resistere posse* (1.16.7: “may they devote themselves to military life and know, and thus hand down to their descendants, that no human power can resist Roman arms!”). But the poetic form imposed by Ovid on the words of this *pater* of the nation (son of father Mars) has the effect of recalling the legacy of another severe *pater* of the Roman people, Virgil’s Anchises (*Aen.* 6.851–52): *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes)*.

In Anchises’ speech the reduction of *artes* to *imperium* entails considerable sacrifices:¹⁸ *hae*, “these, and not the liberal arts in which others shall excel.” And the arts in Ovid, inherited from a *pater* like the Romulus of the *Fasti*, are reduced purely and simply to those of war. Romulus is equally clear when he informs Proculus that he is none other than Quirinus (2.507): *tura ferant placentque novum pia turba Quirinum*.

This is a novelty that must not be underestimated: Livy had shown the Roman people invoking their vanished ruler *of their own accord* as an immortal (1.16.3, *deum deo natum*). It would have been harmful to his

18. The admonition by Anchises, which confines Roman ambition to the space of war and rule, is in tension with its own form—a great, ambitious utterance of a Roman poetic sublime—and with the memory of Ennius at l. 846, when Anchises was quoting Roman poetry very literally indeed (note Hine 1987, 182; Hardie 1992, 104). Virgil’s reader should be ironically aware that Anchises, after all, has no control on the future level and scope of Roman arts.

argument to assign the entire responsibility for the new cult to Proculus's report, a speech that all the rest of the historical tradition presents as a more or less cynical instance of political manipulation¹⁹ directed toward the dismayed mob. These tactics make it advisable to do without a direct identification of Romulus in Quirinus, if his deification is required to emerge "from the rank and file." Once again Ovid's version sounds both more official and more arbitrary. The populace in his story is generically unhappy and suspicious of the patricians (2.497): the decision to adopt Romulus as a fully fledged god only originates with his own presentation of himself as such: "I am a new god."

Ovid's commemoration of the *Quirinalia* thus carries us backward through Ennius, Virgil, Livy, and a martial *Romanitas* to the beginnings of a ruler-cult in Rome.²⁰ In this exemplary narrative Ovid assigns a principal role to the only witness, whose name, not by chance, is *Iulius Proculus*; this Julius "from afar," who arrives at the crucial moment from Alba Longa and meets *Rom-ulus*, is the first historical character in archaic Rome to bear this illustrious gentile name, and for the Augustans he evidently looms large as a connecting link between the Alban dynasty of Julians descended from Aeneas and the history of the ruling house. *Sed Proculus Longa veniebat Iulius Alba* (2.499) echoes the official voice of the Augustan Apollo in a political poem by Propertius (4.6.37): *O Longa mundi servator ab Alba / Auguste*.²¹ Right from the very foundation of Rome, it is made clear, a Julian was concerned in the process of apotheosis, and Romulus is a god because one must believe what he says (his descendant Augustus will repeat this pattern: as *divi filius* he will make Caesar's divinity plausible, and his ascent to the heavens too will be vouched for by a single witness, well rewarded for this service).²²

After a similar exercise in credulity, the reader is immediately informed that the day that commemorates all this is also called All Fools' Day. Naturally there can be no malice in the calendar: but a narrator who decides to tell this controversial story of apotheosis on the very day of the *Quirinalia*—and not on 7 July, the generally accepted date for Romulus's mysterious disappearance—could appear far less innocent, if required to answer for this insidious combination of elements. And this impression is strengthened by the fact that if we continue reading our

19. I appropriate a definition by Jocelyn 1988, 45.

20. Note the parallel with Hercules, who according to Ovid institutes a cult for himself at Rome (cf. p. 98), and with Romulus who (re)writes his own genealogy (cf. pp. 171 ff.).

21. One of the very few occurrences of "Augustus" in elegiac poetry (Syme 1978, 183).

22. Dio Cassius 56.46.2.

Ovid, there seems to be at least a tenuous link between the two anniversaries. Romulus, as we have seen, in his farewell speech recommended that the Romans should make war, or rather that they should *cultivate* war. The Romans are known to have followed his instructions: antique Rome is not famous for its *cultus*, its culture. But this brings with it an interesting consequence. The next festival, the *Parentalia*, reminds Ovid of an antique plague, whose cause was the neglect of funeral rites because too much time and energy was devoted to making war: *dum longa gerunt pugnacibus armis / bella, Parentales deseruere dies* (2.547–48). A poem like the *Fasti*, a cultural work that prescribes the due observance of days and rites, is an implicit response to this lack of *cultus*. But let us come back to our picture of the *stultorum feriae*. The first thing we learn after leaving Quirinus (2.515–18) is that the Romans were bad farmers: war had exhausted them, they preferred the sword to the plough, the earth did not yield fruit—in short, the Romans lacked the capacity to *colere*. At this point—almost as a response to this militaristic excess—Ovid inserts the useful invention of the goddess *Fornax*, personification of the oven. The admission of this gentle deity into the Roman pantheon has a balancing effect, after Romulus's adoption of the name of the Sabine war god (whose large temple Augustus has restored, *Mon. Anc.* 4.5–6), and when all Ovid's readers can consult an informative inscription on the base of the statue of Romulus that occupies a conspicuous place in the new Augustan Forum (*CIL* 1.1².189; cf. *Fasti* 5.565 ff.):

ROMULUS MARTIS
FILIUS URBEM ROMAM
CONDIDIT. . . .
RECEPTUSQUE IN DEORUM
NUMERUM QUIRINUS
APPELLATUS EST.

REMUS RETURNS

The festivals and their placing in the layout of the year must not be regarded as interchangeable elements that the poet is free to manipulate as he likes. Ovid's personal decisions—the shifts, associations, and distortions he effectuates—must be seen in relation to a basic body of knowledge that is already common to the poet and his audience, and it is the interaction between Ovid's *tempora* and the tradition that gives meaning to the narrative. When this produces a conflict in implications or in an-

thropological references, the reader is invited to work out an explanation of his own. With this in mind, let us look at Ovid's account of the *Lemuria* during the month of May (5.451 ff.), in which we find an account of the consequences of Remus's death. The theme of the relationship between Romulus and Remus in the *Fasti* will provide us with a great deal of material (cf. part II, chapter 4), but here we can read the story as an independent narrative, as long as we remember that the *Lemuria* is not an empty slot that the narrator can arbitrarily fill in with his own personal choice of diegesis and exegesis: on the contrary, this festival is an important moment in the life of every Roman, which brings its own particular paradigm with it in its yearly recurrence, and which is defined in the context of the calendar (and not only in that of the poem) by its own specific and contrastive characteristics.

There is no room for confusion, for example, between the *Lemuria* and another festival for the dead, the *Parentalia* sequence in February. The *Parentalia* is a family festival. Virgil set the model, taken up by Ovid, for the narrative explanation of this festival in his account of the sacrifices that the dutiful Aeneas dedicated to the genius of his father Anchises. The significance of the *Parentalia* is the establishment of a correct relationship between the family group and its dear departed. The *Lemuria*, starting with its name, is quite a different thing.²³ On this occasion the dead are seen as potential revenants who must be driven away and kept far off, and not as *parentes* to be visited with the ritual offerings: the specters of the untimely dead are not to be confused with the ancestors to whose graves offerings are made. What characterizes a culture is precisely its way of dividing up phenomena and experiences (the common factor here being "death") and of codifying the different reactions considered appropriate.

Ovid however plays at crossing and confusing this anthropological division. First he gives an accurate picture of the ritual of the *Lemuria*, with its acts of purification and of driving away the dead, and then he inquires into the origin of its name. This etymology turns out to be difficult—in fact, the one that Ovid chooses is almost unparalleled—and it requires the intervention of Mercury (5.449–50): *Venit adoratus Caducifer. Accipe causam / nominis: ex ipso est cognita causa deo* ("The

23. Sabbatucci 1988, 164, thinks that Ovid has been "misled" and corrects him: the dead implicated in the two celebrations cannot be the same. Romulus is a *parens*, Remus a quintessential *lemur*. There are remarkable comments on the nexus of religion and poetics in Phillips 1992.

Caduceus-bearer came as invoked. Here's the reason for the name: I learned the reason from the god himself").

There are valid reasons for the presence here of this particular god: the subject of the narrative is to be the shades in the Underworld, and Hermes is their guide; and in more than one aspect May is a month that belongs to Mercury. It may be a disturbing point to be reminded of, but in lines 681 ff. we shall be informed that Mercury is also the patron god of lies: the merchant whose voice is accustomed to deceive (*solita fallere*, 680) prays to Mercury (sincerely?) that the god will purify and wipe out his perjuries and his broken promises, his fraudulent practices and his false oaths, and will grant that all this may continue in the future: Mercury is amused at this request that is so appropriate to his role as god of thieves.²⁴ Our only evidence (cf. part II, chapter 5) thus comes from a god who is naturally inclined toward deceit: his very name *Caducifer* (499) may remind us, by association, of "caducous" words, fleeting words without substance.²⁵

In fact the story of Remus that Mercury tells is a story of caducous hopes and unheeded messages. Brutally murdered, and buried by Romulus, Remus appears as a ghost and asks his friends Faustulus and Acca to persuade Romulus to grant him a modest boon, a day dedicated to his name. Romulus, we are told, agrees and establishes the *Remuria*. It is a pity that this ghostly sign of Remus's presence in his city has become extinct and that, to add insult to injury, the *Remuria*, mispronounced as *Lemuria*, has given origin to the common word for specters, *lemures*, and so the final result is that the memory of the poor ghost of Remus has been wiped out. . . . The improbable etymology has become a narrative that obliterates its own origins, and the unconvincing aetiology is a further example of the destiny of an eternal loser. As well as being self-destroying—because the Romans see the *Lemuria* as a day dedicated to specters, and not to Remus—the etymology is inappropriate to the symbolic content of the festival. The tone of Remus's request is mild and supplicatory, and his first thought is to exonerate his brother from any blame for his violent and untimely death: *noluit hoc frater, pietas aequalis in illo est: / quod potuit, lacrimas Manibus ille dedit* (5.471–72:

24. *Poscentes ridet* (5.691) is elusive: it could express divine benevolence as well as a mockery of the request, so the would-be fraudulent is now himself a dupe. A trickster god is not the best warrant for the success of a prayer. The merchant's prayer is phrased (5.681–90) like a parody of standard invocations: "please ignore my lies and dirty tricks and perjury" against the normal "listen to my words and make them come true."

25. This meaning of *caducus* is attested e.g. at *Met.* 9.597; *Her.* 15.208; *Fasti* 1.181.

"my brother did not desire my death, his love is equal to mine: he did what he could, he offered tears to my spirit").

Considering the circumstances of Remus's death, we might expect him to appear as the typical revenant, revengeful and terrifying, just what the exorcistic structure of the *Lemuria* is supposed to conjure up and to control. The *lemures* must represent a threat to the living, otherwise the whole ritual would be motiveless: they have even been defined as *larvae nocturnae et terrificationes imaginum*.²⁶ On the contrary, here we have a benign spirit who is still firmly anchored in the context of family affections, a spirit who would be at home among the funerary honors of the *Parentalia*—the festival, we remember, during which Romulus-Quirinus has peremptorily claimed a day for himself;²⁷ the festival that offers prayers for the emperor's health and long life; the festival from which all those who do not love their relatives are excluded, and in which their death is wished for (2.623 ff.); the festival from which the poet took care to drive away, above all, quarrelsome brothers: *procul hinc, procul impius esto / frater*. The paradox is thus complete. The anthropological content of the *Lemuria*, etched indelibly on the collective memory of Ovid's Roman readers, keeps alive the suspicion of a fratricide that must be expiated, just when the dead man is doing his best to explain that he is not a revengeful ghost to be driven away, but a "dear departed" to be remembered. There is something pathetic in Remus's hope of becoming an illustrious Roman *post mortem*, when we reflect that there is no trace of him in the parade of ancestors consecrated by the sixth book of the *Aeneid*; Anchises has time only to name Romulus.

If we are required to perform an act of intellectual mediation between the *Parentalia* and the *Lemuria*, the result is once again ambiguous. The two festivals are based on a functional opposition between two categories of the dead—those that are benign and belong to the family, and those that constitute a threat and must be driven away. This opposition may imply a basic ambiguity, difficult to overcome, in the Romans' relationship with their dead. But it is clear that the distinctions made between the two festivals—in their placement in calendar time, in the forms of their ritual, and in their mode of representing the spirits of the dead (*lemures* and *parentes*)²⁸—are all directed toward the definition of this relationship in two separate images regulated by a functional order.

26. Non. p. 197, 1 L. 27. See above, p. 114.

28. Sabbatucci 1988, 165, has a neat formulation: Romulus is to Remus what *Lemuria* are to *Parentalia*.

In Ovid however the tension is restored to this ambivalence, a tension centered on the figure of Remus and his ever-conflictual relationship with the father of the nation.²⁹

A PICNIC AT PHILIPPI

We have alluded more than once to the “stratified” nature of the Augustan calendar, and perhaps the time has now come to examine the ways in which this “layering” can suggest varying paradigms of associations. Perhaps the expression “stratified nature” is too generic here: from our present perspective only two layers actually interest us, one of which is a gradual geological formation, which extends throughout the development of Roman culture in the republican period, while the other is a thin coating, laid on in the course of a few years by the determined hand of the prince. These two levels of the calendar are thus not really comparable: the former is the product of an associative register that is mobile, variable, and open to explanation and free discussion, while the latter comes from a prescriptive register that has a rigid syntagmatic organization and that is able to further its objectives by selecting a part, a well-defined and clearly oriented part, of the associations and explanations proposed by the republican festivals. This new layer of the calendar is both a selection and a rereading of the older level. It is interesting to see what happens when the two layers are found side by side on a particular date.

Our first example falls on the ides of March, a day that the narrator sees under the sign of sensual pleasures (3.523): *Idibus est Annae festum geniale Perennae* (“On the ides there is the genial festival of Anna Perenna”).

The festival is pictured as a spontaneous and carefree popular celebration. The populace streams along the green banks of the Tiber, every lad is with his lass, the wine flows, and the sun is warm: couples disappear into improvised shelters, songs picked up at the theater are sung, the girls let their hair down and dance. A final sketch presents a figure that will turn out to be particularly significant in the explanation of the festival: a tipsy old woman dragging an old man after her. There will be a lot of talk about merry old women on the ides of March.

The task of explaining who Anna Perenna actually is leads Ovid into

29. The representation of Romulus in the *Fasti* returns as a main theme in my next chapter.

a labyrinth of stories, which share a certain lightness of atmosphere: Anna is Dido's sister and the heroine of an adventure story involving Aeneas and the River Numicus; she is a charitable old woman of Bovillae who distributed bread among the plebeians in flight from the city; she is a witty procuress of the gods, who played a comical trick on the god of war. The space occupied by the three stories is almost as long as an epyllion (545–696) and the section ends up with a particularly hilarious *ai-tion*: the story of Mars and his sexual frustration explains the custom of singing bawdy snatches on the festival of Anna Perenna (3.695–96): *Inde ioci veteres obscenaque dicta canuntur / et iuvat hanc magno verba dedisse deo* ("And so old jokes are made and indecent things are sung and it is a pleasure to have tricked a mighty god").

In the midst of this carnival atmosphere, one cannot help feeling that the ides of March ought to be famous for at least one other reason. The astronomical note that puts a finishing touch to the ides of March recalls the ascent of Scorpio, the zodiacal sign that suggested gloomy presentiments to Julius Caesar. And in fact the narrator cannot forget—even if he says he was about to do so—that this same day commemorates the scene of knife blades thrust into the body of a prince (3.695–710):³⁰

Praeteriturus eram gladios in principe fixos
 cum sic a castis Vesta locuta focus:
 "Ne dubita meminisse: meus fuit ille sacerdos;
 sacrilegae telis me petiere manus.
 Ipsa virum rapui simulacraque nuda reliqui:
 quae cecidit ferro, Caesaris umbra fuit.
 Ille quidem caelo positus Iovis atria vidit,
 et tenet in magno templa dicata foro.
 At quicumque nefas ausi, prohibente deorum
 numine, polluerant pontificale caput,
 morte iacent merita: testes estote, Philippi,
 et quorum sparsis ossibus albet humus.
 Hoc opus, haec pietas, haec prima elementa fuerunt
 Caesaris, ulcisci iusta per arma patrem."

I was going to pass over the swords thrust into Julius Caesar, when Vesta said this from her chaste hearth: "Don't hesitate to mention it. That man

30. Editors normally terminate Vesta's speech at l. 702 but it is hard to say how confident we should be, and Ovid's original publication would not use graphic markers to insulate direct speech from narrative. Without much confidence, I would suggest that Vesta continues until l. 710, the end of the section on Philippi. It seems to me that sacral and elevated language is a strong index of continuity for the whole sequence of ll. 699–710.

was my priest. Sacrilegious hands aimed their weapons at me. I stole the man away and left a mere likeness. What fell to the sword was the phantom of Caesar. Installed in heaven indeed that man sees the halls of Jupiter and has a temple dedicated in the great Forum. But whoever dared such wickedness, forbidden by the power of the gods, and violated the person of the chief high priest, lies dead as he deserves. Bear witness, Philippi, and battlefield white with their scattered bones. This was the task, this the duty, this the foundation of Augustus: avenging his father in a righteous war."

The day that had opened with a picnic in the open air and events worthy of a mime show closes with the plain of Philippi, scattered with the whitening bones of the dead, and the young Caesar's revenge, inspired by *Mars Ultor*. This episode can naturally be seen in different lights. If we isolate the excerpt quoted above (and perhaps also forget ll. 695–97), a possible observation would be that Ovid outdoes all his predecessors in Augustanism. The *civilia busta* that still made Propertius uneasy (2.1.27–28) now appear as a pious act of reparation: "Ovid exalts this battle. . . . Does he not add that Vesta had snatched the dictator out of his murderers' hands, leaving nothing but a simulacrum to fall under the knife wounds in Pompey's senate house?"³¹ The effect is one of "impeccable patriotism."³² This intervention on Vesta's part is actually a complete novelty in the tradition relating to the fatal ides, and this holds true even when a more or less parallel work is compared with it, Ovid's own *Metamorphoses*. This epic poem also ends with a divine intervention on Caesar's behalf, but here it is Venus (15.843 ff.) who snatches him away from the conspirators' knives and transforms him into a star or a comet.³³ In view of this mention of catasterism, a vital element in Augustan propaganda, one might expect the version in the *Metamorphoses*—logically enough, as this is an epic and not an elegiac poem—to be in a certain way the more official of the two. Here we have the same truth as that related by Ovid to his Getan friends (*Pont.* 4.13.25; see p. 38 above), when Augustus too ascends to the skies and

31. Frascchetti 1990a, xii. 32. According to Littlewood 1980, 321.

33. Littlewood 1980, 319, sees an "irreproachable Augustan interpretation of the facts" in both texts. On the one side he downplays the differences between the two versions, on the other he exaggerates the relevance of a distinction between an epic and an elegiac code. When in the *Fasti* Vesta substitutes a shadow for the real Caesar, the intervention is worthy of a Homeric or Virgilian goddess: if this variant were narrated in the *Metamorphoses*, few people would resist the idea that Ovid is gesturing toward the conventions of epic decorum and showing his obedience. The catasterism version, inversely, would not be out of place in an elegiac text, and in fact points to Callimachean elegy as a model.

repeats in his own person the model that he had set for the destiny of Caesar: *patris Augusti docui mortale fuisse / corpus, in aetherias numen abisse domos*. According to this imperial cosmology, only Caesar's body was hacked by his murderers, while his soul, fiery like all souls, was raised to the skies and transformed into a flaming star and into divine substance. The parallel event in the *Fasti* is not so easy to visualize—a murder without a corpse—and it follows the pattern of a different topos: Caesar is carried away all in one piece from his attackers, and the conspirators pay the penalty for their profane act without even having proved that the prince is mortal.³⁴

So here we have a poet who gives us two contradictory versions, both his own, of the same event, and one of the two states, "It wasn't really x, but a simulacrum of him." One may well think that the *Fasti* story sounds rather like a "palinode" of the *Metamorphoses* version. One may even recall the model of Stesichorus's *Palinodia* ("The Trojan War? Helen only went there as a phantom . . ."), an insidious poem that suggests strong pressures on the part of its commissioners, and that reveals the malleability of narrative in poetry.

The vendetta of Caesar the younger for the murder of Caesar the elder is a crucial moment in the construction of the public figure that will later be called Augustus. Ovid makes this clear elsewhere by means of a suggestive play on words (*Fasti* 5.569–70): . . . *cum pia sustulit arma. / A tantis PRINCEPS INCIPIENDUS erat* (" . . . when he dutifully took up arms: he had to make such a start as our leading citizen").

That is the point from which the prince—the "number one"—began. In *Fasti* 5.573–77 we see the young prince ask Mars the revenger for his help in punishing those who committed this sacrilege: Augustus speaks directly (unusual in Augustan poetry) and demands blood: *Mars ades et satia scelerato sanguine ferrum*.³⁵ Ovid shows us that when he wants to he is perfectly able to write in the antique style used by Virgil in his epic. Augustus's speech is introduced by an austere *talia dicta dedit* (5.572). The line that opens the prayer is harsh and sibilant, with a triple con-

34. It is hard to say to what extent direct representation of the murder of Caesar was appreciated in the more orthodox milieu. I cannot help mentioning (although this will do no good to my scholarly reputation) a curious incident in Mussolini's career (pointed out by T. Kezich, *Mercurio*, January 12, 1991): he is reported to have personally supervised a production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, one which totally omitted the murder episode (the reasons are evident to anyone acquainted with Italian traditions about *scaramanzia*, i.e., avoiding bad omens).

35. As we noted earlier in this book (p. 67), this invocation inverts, or undoes, the prayer to Mars uttered by the author of the *Fasti* in 3.1–2.

secutive alliteration in *s*, while the shedding of impious blood recalls solemn vendettas in epic poetry, such as Romulus's *nam mi calido dabis sanguine poenas* (Enn. *Ann.* 95 Sk.) and Aeneas's *poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit* (Verg. *Aen.* 12.949). The appeal "Mars, glut yourself with blood" may even remind us of the earliest prayer to Mars in the Roman world: the Arvals invoked the god with the words *satur fu, fere Mars*, and Augustus is fond of these traditions. (Looking back after fifty years, with few witnesses surviving and a great number of orphans, Ovid's Augustus could perhaps have said something less bellicose, along the lines of "The time of universal peace is near.")³⁶

However, if the account of the ides of March given in *Fasti* 3 is taken at its face value, the expiatory slaughter at Philippi is made to appear somewhat callous. Caesar's abduction by a deity certainly makes him into an epic hero. But in that case all those men lost their lives in battle only to expiate an attack made on a simulacrum: a war (and a civil one) for the sake of a ghost (*Caesaris umbra*) is an event that calls up odd associations, at least for those who have read Euripides' *Helen*.

The victory at Philippi will lead, years later, to an event which is a milestone in official political and religious discourse, the consecration of a sanctuary in honor of *Mars Ultor*.³⁷ When Ovid's readers reach this point they still have a fresh picture in their minds of Mars as a literary character, for they have just been reading about an unfortunate amorous misadventure in which Mars finished up in bed with old Anna, much to the ridicule and amusement of the other gods.³⁸ His attempt to seduce Minerva had ended in checkmate, and Mars was overcome by shame and frustrated rage (691–93), but "now" (in the sequence of the poetic text and on the day of the ides of March) he will be able to recover his dignity on the battlefield, after that appearance in the role of a ridiculous victim of eros. The story of Anna may have ended with a practical joke played on a great god (696, *magno verba dedisse deo*), but 15 March has more and greater gods and temples in store for us (703–4, *Iovis atria . . . in magno templa dicata foro*); the merry obscenities that attend Anna

36. Octavian before Actium in the words of Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* 4.6.5.

37. On the importance of Mars for Augustan ideology, see e.g. Schilling 1988, 110 ff.; Riedl 1989, *passim* (with bibliography); Consigliere 1978, 62–92.

38. The lowering of literary level is easy to perceive if one focuses on the similarity to the farcical ending of Plautus's *Casina*. Mars goes one worse than his spectacular misadventure in the *Odyssey*, when he is caught making love to Aphrodite and exposed to shameful curiosity, but is envied by male witnesses. Influences of comic theater, mimic or farcical, are observed by Littlewood 1980, 316–17, and, more cautiously, by McKeown 1984.

Perenna are swept away before the voice of Vesta speaking from her chaste altars (695, *ioci . . . obscenaeque dicta*; as against 698, *a castis . . . focis*). Vesta, as we shall see on another occasion (part II, chapter 5) is a very special divine character. It is above all Ovid's unease at giving the ides of March a bloody epilogue (*Praeteriturus eram . . .*) that makes an ambivalent reading of this "day" possible. *Gladios in principe fixos* is not perhaps the most sympathetic way of describing a sacrilegious murder. One's first thought on reading the words *Praeteriturus eram* is that the poet is reluctant to take up such a serious theme, and the method used to assassinate a prince is not exactly a popular subject with the court; but a formula like *praeteriturus eram* can also suggest that the event does not merit great attention. The stern historian Livy, at least, uses praeteritions of this type to stress the fact that certain arguments fall below the dignity required of a work of national *res gestae*: *rem dictu parvam praeterirem ni . . .* (9.30.5)

After dedicating about a hundred and fifty lines to the adventures of his Protean heroine, the poet would have omitted Caesar and Philippi if it had not been for Vesta's admonitory intervention. However, what he must now relate is nothing less than the story of how Octavian became what he is (709–10): *Hoc opus, haec pietas, haec prima elementa fuerunt / Caesaris, ulcisci iusta per arma patrem*.

Here, as in his lines on *Mars Ultor* (5.573 ff.), Ovid elevates his poetic tone and shows that he knows how to write in the epic register: we are treated to an imposing sentence in enjambement (705–7), rhythmic alliterations (*prohibente . . . polluerant pontificale; morte . . . merita*), long words (706 is a pentameter composed of only four words), horrific imagery (the earth white with bones), formulae (*testes estote*, which is also phonetically marked: *TESTES ESToTE*), rare and solemn verb forms (*estote*, found only four times in the entire Ovidian corpus, generally in an ironic context), and a noble and unforgettable Virgilian sentence (*Aen.* 6.129): *Hoc opus, hic labor est*.

The battlefield of Philippi, with its corpses and its survivors, is an awkward theme for Augustan historical ideology to handle. Even a politically conformist historian like Velleius (2.86.3) shows some traces of embarrassment when he praises the prince's clemency after Actium and declares that on that occasion Octavian demonstrated how merciful he *might* have been—if the circumstances had allowed him to be—on the day of Philippi. It was Philippi, not Pharsalus (don't believe Lucan), that was seen as the ultimate civil war. The battle left a feeling of horror in its wake, not only because the prisoners were executed but above all be-

cause the dead (among whom many were of noble rank) were refused burial.³⁹ By a disturbing coincidence, the image of the scattered bones (*sparsis ossibus albet humus*, 708) sounds like the poetic echo of a text that describes the squalid collective burial grounds used for slaves and paupers (Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.15–16): *tristes / albis informes spectabant ossibus agros*.

Augustan discourse certainly saw this exemplary punishment of the conspirators as a sign of religious and filial *pietas*. But a new and specific metaphor like *elementa* adds an extra touch to this already traditional sequence. Ovid's aim is to explain where the prince began his career and his education. We seem to gather that it is on the battlefield covered with bleached bones that the little prince has learned his letters, his ABCs. The whitened bones that shine out against the dark earth are an odd reminder of the whiteness of the *elementa*, the little *ivory* letters that were given to children for their first exercises.⁴⁰ If this is where the new Caesar began, there is something to worry about. Inspired by a rather different form of piety, the youthful god Apollo (in Callim. *Hymn.* 2.57 ff.) had started his career by picking up the horns of sacrificed beasts and making them into a little altar; in this way Phoebus learned to lay down foundations and to build. Perhaps at Philippi Octavian is spelling out the new name that he has won on the battlefield: the *prima elementa* of CAESAR (the first letters of the name) come from the verb *caedo*, as any Roman etymologist could confirm.⁴¹

These implications may be, and mostly are, the result of a biased reading of the text, but Ovid has done very little to neutralize them. The sense of alienation produced by reading the account of the death of Caesar does not come from ideological prejudices but from the context that the narrator has carefully constructed for this episode, inserting it in such a way that it seems to be an adjunct to the popular festival of Anna Perenna. The strident incompatibility between these mutually irrelevant commemorations undermines the efficacy of the propaganda of Caesar's avenger. The product of the combination of these two stories is not so

39. Suet. *Aug.* 13; pseudo-Sen. *Oct.* 515–16.

40. This pedagogic tool is mentioned by Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.1.26. *Prima elementa* as an idiom of teaching is attested in Manilius 2.762.

41. On etymologies of Caesar in antiquity see Maltby 1991, s.v.; Ahl 1985, 80–81, has a perspective similar to my own, on some passages in the *Metamorphoses*. It would be useful, as a development of Ahl's approach to poetic language, to focus more restrictively on those situations where the wordplay is supported by other clues in the immediate context: in our case, for example, the contribution of *prima elementa* is helpful if one wants to make a case for the *Caes/caedo* implication.

much an alternative model, a type of counterpropaganda, as a sensation of conflict that stems from a perpetually open choice. In these days, being a proper Roman means celebrating Anna Perenna and Philippi every year. Which would you prefer, a jolly picnic in the open air, complete with food, wine, and lovemaking, or the slaughter of the conspirators? The calendar guarantees that the two options will always be present and open, on every new 15 March (and they still are—my own Roman calendar, printed in Bristol in the 1980s, offers for the ides of March: “Assassination of Julius Caesar—Anna Perenna, protector of the returning year: great popular holiday”).

AGRARIAN FESTIVALS, MILITARY FESTIVALS

Our experience with the ides of March has taught us to give careful consideration to those areas of the calendar that present some type of cohabitation or contact between the deeper and more complex layer of the religious festivals, with their cyclical agrarian background and their explanatory apparatus, and the new syntagmatic level, which structures the prince's presence in the city's time scheme. The framework of this new level of the calendar is a perfectly predictable celebratory discourse, and often there is little sense in asking how much conviction or sincerity there may be in Ovid's use of this political code. Any discussion along these lines would end up by involving the whole of Ovid's opus, and there is little hope of producing new results. A more promising approach is to inquire into the ways by which the poet's voice controls (admitted that he intends to control them) the effects of editing that arise, and that cannot be avoided, in the mind of whoever attempts to read the *Fasti* in the way that its nature requires, that is, as a continuous commentary on the Roman year. It is reasonable to suppose that from an Augustan point of view the objective to be attained would be the maximum possible integration between these various levels of reference. As long as Augustus presents himself as the natural completion and continuation of Rome's history, his actions must be recorded in such a way as to harmonize with the antique anniversaries and to acquire the same degree of motivation that these festivals had accumulated over the centuries. The aim of the new regime is to insert itself in the overall picture of Rome's identity.

Ovid is confronted with an interesting sequence on 15 and 16 April. The first of these two days is dedicated to the age-old festival of the *Foridicia*, and the poet retrieves some valuable antiquarian comments on

the rite and includes a short account of its origins. Here we have one of the typical actions of King Numa, the most likeable and provident among the characters that appear recurrently in the *Fasti*,⁴² in which he combines a sense of religion with a shrewd faculty of interpretation (4.649–70): the result is the annual sacrifice of the gravid cow, which is still repeated in Ovid's Rome. In concluding his treatment of this anniversary, Ovid reminds us of its profound significance. The rite may be bloody, but by means of this sacrifice a yearly contract is stipulated for the fertility of the soil and the abundance of its harvests, a preoccupation which is central to the festive organization of the Roman year (4.671–72):

Exta bovis gravidae dantur, fecundior annus
provenit, et fructum terra pecusque ferunt.

He offers a pregnant cow's innards. The year turns out more bountiful, and the earth and stock bear fruit.

The entry for the following day recalls a memorable occasion for Augustus, his first imperial salutation, which took place after the operations at Mutina and is recorded in the calendars on 16 April. Ovid makes the transition from the one anniversary to the other by bringing a heraldic divinity onto the stage, *Venus Victrix*, to preside over the new ruler's inaugural victory (4.671–76):

Exta bovis gravidae dantur, fecundior annus
provenit, et fructum terra pecusque ferunt.
Hanc quondam Cytherea diem properantius ire
iussit et admissos praecipitavit equos,
ut titulum imperii cum primum luce sequenti
Augusto iuveni prospera bella darent.

. . . Once Venus ordered this day to make haste and plunged the Sun's horses down at breakneck speed, so that the next day's successful battle might more quickly acclaim the young Augustus "imperator."

As we have already seen in another context (see p. 87 above), the events at Mutina can give rise to awkward associations, because of their connection with an affair that many Romans still obstinately regarded as a civil war. But there is no trace of this idea in our text: on the contrary Ovid employs a traditional figure of panegyric to draw attention to the

42. On the relevance of this preferential status see Hinds 1992.

divine protection that Venus extends over the whole cosmos in favor of the sovereign. The goddess herself has made the preceding day pass more quickly, by hastening the course of the sun, in order to honor Octavian (here anachronistically designated as Augustus) as soon as possible with his first victory in war. Within the register of the encomium, all this (or nearly all) seems natural:⁴³ but the fact remains that in order to reach Augustus more quickly, out of all possible days to sacrifice the choice has fallen on that very one that guarantees the future of peace-loving agrarian Italy. Numa had taken great trouble to ensure the prosperity of the harvests; the future emperor takes trouble to wage *prospera bella* on Italian soil. There is no explicit conflict between the two anniversaries, but one cannot say that we are offered a harmonious synthesis between

43. Other shadowy areas emerge from the interpretation of Riedl 1989, 34–37 (she concludes, however, that we are dealing ultimately with an orthodox celebration, since the basic fact is that the poem was written to please Augustus).

There are problems with Ovid's dating of the *salutatio imperatoria*—16 April—and the whole sequence: battle of Mutina (14 April), Fordicidia (15), Augustus imperator (16) is not the only possible option offered by calendrical sources. Perhaps the parallel organized by the poetic text between Mutina (4.627–28 and 673 ff.) and the anniversary of Thapsos (4.379 ff.) deserves some interest: one victory for the father, one for the son, linked by poetic descriptions of bad weather (385–86; 626 ff.). Yet the link could be insidious. Octavian is introduced as defeating some unspecified “armies of Mutina” (627) whereas Caesar is designated on an epic wavelength (by one of his veterans, not the most neutral of witnesses) as the one who *magnanimi contudit arma lubae* (4.380). Mutina and Thapsos are similar in being the least convenient anniversaries for unproblematic celebrations. Thapsos is where fourteen Pompeian legions were annihilated—and the magnanimous but scheming lubas was an ally—and where the fallout included Cato's death. Octavian's role at Mutina is a peak of controversy in his career. On some views of the event, the action was very garbled, and he is marked out especially for protecting his own camp, or, less favorably, for a fast escape (Riedl's historical commentary, 1989, 36). For readers with a memory of this disparaging tradition, it can be meaningful that Venus speeds up the preceding day (4.673–74), the day when the prince-to-be suffered an eclipse from the battlefield (so Suet. *Aug.* 10.4). It would be useful to rehearse all military celebrations of Augustus in the *Fasti* with a critical eye. One is struck by the total absence of Actium (1.711 is the only hint), which is the most useful of victories for panegyric writers. The narrative about the successful reappropriation of Crassus's standards (5.580–94) is often quoted as a zero degree of orthodox praise, but even there the language chosen by Ovid is vague—as suits this diplomatic success—and the final line includes, I think, a neat double entendre (5.593): *Parthe, refers aquilas, victos quoque porrigis arcus* . . . Parthian archers are proverbial and often referred to in the context, but there is and could be no actual mention of warfare: the “surrender” of Parthians had as a main result a well-known monument, twin buildings that contemporary language labels *Arcus* (triumphal arches: the pretentious word that supplants *foris* for official buildings in the Augustan age). Parthian have presented the prince with their *Arcus*.

In general, the limited presence of Augustan military anniversaries tends to be explained in connection with a supposed “defensive” evolution of Augustan foreign politics, but this is not enough to clarify why only a few calendrical events are mapped by Ovid onto his selective record, and why they are so oddly described.

the rural almanac and the imperial agenda (a possible means of reconciling the two would have been to portray Augustus as the protector of peace and fruitfulness, after Numa had managed to put an end to the agricultural crisis).

AUFER, VESTA, DIEM . . .

If a divinity can cut short an antique festival, a traditional anniversary can also be appropriated and handed over lock, stock, and barrel to new owners. Ovid gives evidence of this kind of situation, with its potential clash of interests, on 28 April. According to the tradition interpreted by the poet, this day falls within a period of popular holidays, connected with the games of the goddess Flora. The dominant note of the *Floralia*, as Ovid does not fail to explain, is playful and sensual, feminine and transgressive. *Scaena ioci morem liberioris habet* (4.946); *mater ades florum, ludis celebranda iocosis* (5.183); *scaena levis decet hanc: non est, mihi credite, non est / illa coturnatas inter habenda deas* (5.347–48). It is clear that the festival of Flora centers on the liberation—and the control—of ludic impulses, and on the celebration of female sexuality. Ovid uses the word *ioci* and its cognate terms to refer to a whole comic and sexual sphere in the *Fasti*, with precise connotations in the hierarchy of the literary genres (see part II, chapter 7, below).⁴⁴ Modern scholarship has added various fascinating details to our knowledge of the *Floralia*, which can explain the popular success and the stability of this festival: “The *Florales* were not ordinary games: they were more like a parody of the Circus games, with prostitutes exhibiting themselves in the place of gladiators (cf. *Fasti* 5.349, *turba quidem cur hos celebret meretricia ludos*)”; “the *Florales* seem to have amounted to a stint of forced labor exacted from the prostitutes by the Roman state”; and Arnobius’s telling and concise accusation—“The brothel has moved house into the circus”—is quoted.⁴⁵ The absorption of this lewd element into public spectacle and parody was organized, as Ovid makes clear (5.352, *vult sua plebeio sacra patere choro*), for the benefit of the plebeian masses. The social characteristics of the public show combine with a low stylistic register, which admits the world of farce and comedy into the *Fasti*.

44. This idiom of literary criticism returns with great emphasis in the poetics of Martial, an author who frames his “light” poetic achievement as something analogous to the *iocosae dulce . . . sacrum Florae* (*Epist.* 1.18–21).

45. Sabbatucci 1988, 151–52.

The narrator's relationship with Flora is marked by a fellow feeling that has few parallels in the poem. Perhaps only Venus and Ovid's ironical Janus are favored with a comparable degree of intimacy. The poet dismisses Flora with a tender, fragrant, and metaliterary farewell (5.375–78):

... *tenues secessit in auras.*
Mansit odor: posses scire fuisse deam.
Floreat ut toto carmen Nasonis in aevo
sparge, precor, donis pectora nostra tuis.

... she withdrew in thin air, but her perfume lingered. One just knew that a goddess had been there. To ensure that Ovid's poem blooms in every age, sprinkle my heart, I pray, with your gifts.

This text, which supplies the name of its author and a prayer for the success and long life of the book,⁴⁶ has all the appearance of an effective seal on the whole poem. It also seems to be quoting an important passage from the *Aetia*, Callimachus's prayer to the Graces to steep his elegies in their perfume (fr. 7.13 ff. Pf.).⁴⁷ As befits the goddess Flora, there is also a touch of humor in this compliment on her fragrance, because *odor* points irresistibly to *Nasonis*, showing the poet to be a natural devotee, starting with his name, of the goddess of flowers.⁴⁸ The effect of the echo of Callimachus and of the floral symbolism is to ennoble this goddess with whom Ovid is striking a bargain: but up to a few lines earlier (367–68, *deliciis nocturna licentia nostris / convenit*) the nature of Flora's true field of action had been made quite clear: it is the real-life equivalent of such literary genres as mime (with its stripteases) and erotic poetry: the expressions *lascivia* (331), *liberior . . . iocus* (332), *numen non . . . se-verum* (333), *deliciis* (334), *nulla . . . seria* (341), and *scaena levis* (347) mark out their literary territory like boundary stones and indicate an effective cultural polarity.

We have insisted on the narrator's clearly shown affection for Flora, so that this can give added significance to what happens on 28 May. All the excerpts I have just quoted come from the fifth book, because the

46. There are no other mentions of Naso in the poem.

47. Already referred to in the address to Venus, 4.5–16; on metapoetic implications, see above, p. 58.

48. A parallel etymological wordplay can be suggested for *Trist.* 2.118–20, where “Naso” tells us that he has achieved a *grande . . . nomen* and the cognoscenti classify him among the *non fastiditis viris*: in contemporary parlance, *fastidire* is a typical word for matters of taste, and is often varied through metaphors like *nasutus*, *suspendere naso*, etc. “Naso” is now a poet with a big name—Big Nose, indeed—and is respected as such by fellow literati with a flair.

goddess has been literally evicted from a part of her festival, which used to cover the end of April and the beginning of May.⁴⁹ The fact that Ovid excludes Flora from the last part of the fourth book (April), and postpones her entry to well into the fifth book (183 ff.) does not correspond, as we have seen, to any cooling of the relationship between the goddess and her singer: it is just that Flora has to give up her place, 28 April, to a more elevated cause (4.946–49):

scaena ioci morem liberioris habet.
Exit et in Maias sacrum Florale Kalendas:
tunc repetam, nunc me grandius urget opus.
Aufer, Vesta, diem!

The stage has a custom of greater licentiousness. The rites of Flora extend past the calends of May: I'll return to them then, now a grander subject is pressing. Take your day, Vesta!

Exit Flora. "Take the day away with you, Vesta!" On 28 April the Augustan calendars record an important decree of the Senate: the day becomes a festival in commemoration of the transference of the vestal cult to the interior of Augustus's house on the Palatine. This is an ideological and religious event of the greatest importance. Augustus takes the revolutionary step of "sequestering," and enclosing in his own private *domus*, one of the public cults that is most central to the Roman system, and—with the typical ambivalence of Augustan discourse—he gives a two-directional nature to this move, because by bringing a public cult within its walls he makes part of his residence become public. The result is a symbiosis between the prince and the prestigious cult of Vesta, while the traditional boundaries between public and private are broken down, and the prince's personal piety toward the pledges of the Empire is in its turn indirectly suggested as an object of cult. Ovid has earned the gratitude of historians for his promptitude in drawing attention to this carefully meditated strategy, by which the prince is sustained by a ring of *cognata numina*, also indicated physically by the use of architectural space.

This has also led historians to see Ovid as a *supporter* of this strategy. The eviction of Flora sounds like an unmistakable act of homage, in which a "lightweight" traditional cult makes way for a new "heavy-weight" cult. There is no repetition here of the mild scandal of the *ides*

49. Fraschetti 1990a, 34–36, stresses the importance of this case where old and new calendar are potentially conflicting.

of March, when Vesta had to raise her voice for Caesar to be made divine in the very midst of the obscene revels of Anna Perenna's followers. Here the chaste Vesta is spared any direct confrontation with Flora and her striptease artistes, who are hurriedly put off to the following month. Vesta's chastity is associated with a paradigm that is both ideological (the divinity of the emperor and his genealogy, which are transformed into symbiosis with the *cognata numina*) and literary: the style becomes official, in consonance with the senatorial formulary of the *iusti patres* (950); but this also marks an implicit choice between genres, because the scenic license of Flora's cult (946) was a reminder of the "low" dimension of the satyric drama (a dimension that has an important place in the *Fasti*; cf. part II, chapter 7), while it is not by chance that the irruption of the Augustan voice, *nunc me grandius urget opus* (948) recalls the pressure (described in rather alarming terms) exerted by grandiose tragedy on the light and sensual *Amores* (*Am.* 3.1.69–70): *teneri properentur Amores, / dum vacat: a tergo grandius urguet opus* ("let us complete in haste the soft *Amores*, as long as we can: a bigger task is looming behind us").

Thus the victories of political order, of chastity, and of the high style all come together in the victory of a precise choice of field, as the *Fasti* opts for one literary genre at the expense of another. Ovid finds an important instrument in the poetics of the *Fasti*, for the precise reason that it provides him with an explicit frame of reference, justified by the polymorphous nature of the calendar, for the conflict between genres. Up to this point, in fact, the literary historian has had little cause to disagree with the antiquarian and with the historian of Augustan politics: 28 April is an opportunity for the singer of tender loves to fall into line. One objection however, even if a marginal one, can be raised, that of a certain perversity shown by the poet in continually drawing attention to the gap, or to the forcible suture, between the old textuality of the lunar calendar and the new anniversaries of the regime. In this case Vesta's intervention, the cause of which is Augustus, appears as an act of violence: *aufer, Vesta, diem*.

However, if we admit the idea of a competition between Vesta and Flora, there is no reason why we should interrupt our reading of the poem at the end of the fourth book. We have already seen that the match goes on and will offer an excellent performance on Flora's part, with her sexy and fragrant poetics. But what about Vesta? The prince's favorite goddess is given even more space than Flora, in the final book of the poem. From a different, but complementary, point of view, we shall see

later (part II, chapter 5) how Vesta is subjected to a real and proper process of deconstruction. Torn between incompatible representations, elusive and imageless, the goddess makes only one brief anthropomorphic narrative appearance—and that one in a most unexpected kind of story (6.319–46). The exordium, *est multi fabula parva ioci* (320), immediately evokes the atmosphere of Flora's festival, and this is confirmed by the entry of the first character to take part in the action, Priapus (319). The purpose of the narrative is to account for the crowning of the donkey at the celebration of "the bakers' Vesta":⁵⁰ at the end of the story we shall discover that this animal is hateful to Priapus and is sacrificed in his honor at Lampsacus (345 ff.). This allusion functions as a clear internal reference back to the story of Priapus and Lotis in the first book, which in fact explained the aetiology of the donkey sacrifice in honor of Priapus (1.391–92: *Caeditur et rigido custodi ruris asellus: / causa pudenda quidem, sed tamen apta deo* ("An ass is killed for Priapus, erect guardian of the fields. The reason is indecent, but it fits that god"). Incredible as it may seem, Ovid has decided to stage an attempted rape on the goddess Vesta, which in many details reiterates the scene between Priapus and the nymph. Another *causa pudenda*, but can one say that it is appropriate to the stature of the goddess? While there are very probably models and analogies in Alexandrian poetry for the story of Priapus and Lotis, the encounter between Priapus and Vesta is as if suspended in midair, without any parallels. It is only here, on this day of folly, that Vesta takes on a human form.

The setting is provided by a most unlikely party given by the goddess Cybele on Mount Ida. We can imagine that Vesta was present in her role of Trojan deity, and there is a solemn note in the exordium to the account of the party (6.322, *convocat aeternos ad sua festa deos*), if for no other reason than the assonance between this pentameter and the ceremonial presentation of the joint cult of Vesta, Augustus, and Apollo that concluded the fourth book, *aeternos tres habet una deos* (4.954: as we may remember, Flora has just been pushed out). But the continuation of this assembly of the gods gives rise to some suspicions of wanton behavior. The guest list includes satyrs, nymphs, and Silenus, all of whom are habitual signifiers of transgression in the *Fasti* (cf. part II, chapter 7), and the narrator displays an attitude of prudent reserve: *nec licet (et longum est) epulas narrare deorum* (6.325). The divine guests drink wine, play

50. The initial line, 311, is closely modeled on a line in Propertius's aetiological poetry (4.1.21).

unspecified “games,” dance, and find secluded spots to rest on the soft grass. In short, here is a picture of an open-air orgy, which the poet both apparently tones down and actually hints at by his provocative tone of voice. The similar narrative of the Bacchic feast in the first book was more explicit, with its bevy of barefoot and scantily clothed naiads (1.405 ff.); but here, we must remember, more important divinities are involved. The poet’s prudent reserve is broken when Priapus, fully armed, decides to violate Vesta’s chastity—*spem capit obscenam* (6.337). For a long minute, the story topples over into farce (6.341): *ibat, ut inciperet, longi deus Hellesponti*.

Ibat, ut inciperet sounds like the most vulgar sexual slang, and the apparently elegant *longi* . . . *Hellesponti* brings into view the profile that Priapus was certainly presenting at that fatal moment—in 1.437 ff. we had seen him, frustrated and exaggeratedly *obscena* . . . *parte paratus*, exposed to the laughter of all by a pitiless ray of moonlight. Saved by the braying of the donkey, Vesta emerges unharmed from this immersion in the grotesque that is so unbecoming to her dignified status.⁵¹

Religious history and myth analysis both find interesting traces to follow up in this story, because Vesta’s chastity is perhaps only one aspect of a deeper logic: on a different level, the chastity connected with the sacred fire, the symbols of fertility, and the intermediary figure of the donkey can be combined to form a more complex image. But if we read the *Fasti* as a continuous text, subject to the minimum requirements of coherence and co-reference—and I want to insist on this much neglected view of the poem—it is not so easy to find a point of synthesis. All the mentions of Vesta so far made in the poem have by now transformed her into a household deity of Augustus: her ideological function includes such important points as the Aeneidic origins of the Julian family and of Rome, the connection with Julius Caesar, the continuing life of the *domus* in which the sacred fire burns, and, not least in importance, the chastity of the Augustan family.⁵² In the Palatine triad of Apollo-Augustus-Vesta, the goddess has taken over the monopoly of feminine virtue, and the values that she represents are mediated through the austere figure of Livia, who (as Ovid will explain to the admiring Getans in *Pont.* 4.13.29) has the charisma of a “Vesta of the shamefast matrons.” It is this solemn message that has caused the poet to postpone, within the ceremonial space of his text, the goddess Flora’s wanton games. But perhaps the master of ceremonies has lost control of the situation, or

51. A commentary is offered by Fantham 1983. 52. Fantham 1983, 208.

Flora is more vindictive than she seems, for after her springtime triumph, in mid-June Vesta finds herself subjected to the phallic tomfoolery of the irrepressible Priapus.

The reading strategies that interpreters of Ovid usually adopt in order to minimize tensions of this kind are inadequate. A first and very widespread solution to the problem is that of splitting up the text by disciplinary fields. In this way there is no overlap or contact between Vesta and Flora; all one need do is list the former under the heading "faithful reflection of the Augustan program" and the latter under "folklore." And the encounter between Vesta and Priapus? Anthropology can step in here to tone down the provocative element of the story and make it seem quite normal: it is sufficient to realize that Ovid has momentarily picked up—to the great benefit of antiquarians—a thread that goes back to Rome's origins, an underlying connection between the goddess and the semantic field of fertility. I do not mean to deny that Ovid is an invaluable source of information for the history of Roman religion, and I am also convinced that the myth of Vesta and Priapus (however isolated) contains an important message about some of the more forgotten or recondite aspects of the Vestal cult. But I do not think that this solution is the answer to all the problems that confront the interpreter of Ovid's poem. We cannot rule out the possibility that this particular myth appears in this particular place because it also has a contextual effect and a precise function in the continuity of the poem. Nor can we exclude the idea that this function is connected with the significance attributed to Vesta by the Augustan program that is so "faithfully" accepted by the *Fasti*. We cannot exclude anything, because the *Fasti* is a poetic text, and as such is infernally prolific in generating connotations and internal references.⁵³ Nor can we divorce these poetic effects from the political ones that Augustus's cultural policy is having on Rome: the repression or censorship of certain traditions, the selection of others, the limitation of Flora, and the paring down of Vesta's field of action to the point of making her above all into a domestic deity and a patroness of the "Trojan" symbols of the Empire's continuance.

The idea that Ovid limits himself to reflecting the emperor's religious policy is inadequate; but it is equally inadequate to insist on the poet's irresponsible freedom in manipulating the official pantheon. This point

53. As far as I can see, the *Fasti* is the first work of classical poetry which features not just cross-references but localized cross-references: not *infras* and *supras*, but "as I told when dealing with . . .," "as will be said in my treatment of that particular day. . . ."

of view can lead us to forget that the first and greatest manipulator is Augustus himself. Rivalry is in the air, and the world of the gods is far from peaceful. It is under pressure, and all this is Augustus's doing. Hercules climbs the heavens to make way for Mars. Apollo takes up more and more space. The Palatine rises next door to the Capitol. Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the hub of Olympus, must now measure himself against the new power of Juppiter Tonans.⁵⁴ Is it any wonder that the gods in the *Fasti* keep such a close watch on their spheres of influence?

There remains one way out of the difficulty that is habitually resorted to: that of demoting both Flora and the "Priapean" Vesta to the category labeled "frivolous/licentious"—thus continuing to adopt a separative reading of the *Fasti*. By drawing clear boundary lines between Augustan propaganda and entertainment, between carefree days and official days, the division between serious and playful can be maintained. But this very separation is in itself far from neutral: it is the result of an ideological choice, which takes its perspective from Augustan discourse and unconsciously makes this appear natural, and consequently invisible. It is Ovid who puts us on this track by means of his explicit precautions: "I'm only joking," "here is a rather frivolous little story." But the very fact that these signposts are considered necessary ought to make us suspicious about their true function.

54. On this last instance of competition, note Suet. *Aug.* 91.2. Feeney 1991, 216–17, is an important discussion in this area, and he uses the epilogue to the *Metamorphoses* as his test case.

Genealogies

The operations carried out by Augustus on his genealogy are a central issue for the interpretation of the *Fasti*. In presenting his work to Germanicus, Ovid clearly informs the young prince that this will not only be a poem about Rome but also a poem about his family (1.10): *saepe tibi pater est, saepe legendus avus*.

But the generational steps of the family can be followed much further back in time. Augustus is in the singular position of having constructed his own genealogy in two directions, both forward into the future and backward into the past. Although genealogical manipulation, either for political ends or to create a desired image, was common among the Roman nobility, no one had yet carried this strategy so far. Augustus's method of projecting the continuation of his family into the future is a complex system of direct and indirect adoptions. His link with the past is also the result of adoption, and is closely connected with the deification of his adoptive father. Caesar provides the young Octavian with a genealogy that lends itself to an ambitious program of antiquarian, iconographic, and ideological exploitation: its two foundation stones are the paired names Romulus-Mars and Aeneas-Venus. Undoubtedly Caesar and Augustus "took their descent from Romulus extremely seriously."¹ Although Romulus is generally agreed to have died childless, he

1. Binder 1971, 159.

still figures in the line of ancestors at the funerals of Augustus (Dio Cassius 56.34.2) and of Drusus (Tac. *Ann.* 4.9).

Virgilian scholars have been very quick in assuming the existence of a play of compulsory interreflexive images between Aeneas, Romulus, and Augustus, and have even carried this idea to the extreme (and hardly plausible) conclusion that every attribute assigned to Aeneas in the *Aeneid* must necessarily reflect directly onto the figure of Augustus.² One may well wonder why this transaction between Augustus and his ancestors and models should be confined to the early Augustan period. If Augustus refashions the image of his predecessors, and if this refashioning is taken into account in the poetic accounts of Rome's origins, why should we close our inquiry with Virgil's Aeneas, and not consider Ovid's Romulus? It is impossible not to think that genealogical relationships also affect the interpretation of the *Fasti*, and if these relationships played an important part in the construction of Augustan discourse, we cannot airily dismiss them from the outlook of Ovid and his readers.

This genealogical line interferes in a complex way with the structure of the calendar. The traditional Roman calendar does not lend itself to the systematic inclusion of a celebratory genealogical narrative. The individual slots of the festivals can certainly be manipulated and redirected, and in fact the charm of the Roman calendar rests on this very fluidity of associations and its openness to paradigmatic shifts. But the yearly sequence of anniversaries is unsuitable for the projection of a continuous narrative. Not even under Augustus can the calendar be made into a vehicle of praise articulated along the implicit line of a dynasty. Mary Beard has convincingly contrasted Rome's traditional calendar with certain religious calendars of our own times.³ The Christian calendar incorporates a single narrative that reaccompanies the believer, every year of his life, through the cyclical stages of a continuous and exemplary story. The situation is different for a Roman citizen. Many of the festivals and anniversaries in his calendar can include meanings that go beyond the ritual of the particular celebration to indicate various moments and aspects of "Roman identity" that are associated with moments and figures that have been crucial to the city's history and development. However, these associations are always momentary, and the options they present are not linked together in a continuous design.

The difference between the two kinds of calendar becomes less

2. So Cairns 1989, 4 and *passim*; cf. also Binder 1971.

3. Beard 1987, 11.

marked, however, if we consider the case of a Roman citizen born (to give a chance example) in the year 43 B.C.E. During the early years of his life this hypothetical Roman saw a great upheaval in his calendar. The one that his family had always observed was only concerned with festivals in honor of the gods and civic anniversaries.⁴ But between the opening years of Octavian's rule and 14 C.E., no fewer than thirty new additions were made, and they all refer explicitly to a single person, always the same one. Oriented in this way, the Roman calendar is no longer so different from the Christian one. Every year, on established dates, the prince is born, assumes the consular insignia, pays homage to his father, dedicates (and has dedicated to himself) monuments and statues, wins battles, gains triumphs, curses the birthdays of his enemies, becomes pontifex, takes on new names and titles. . . . The calendar is becoming, undeniably and to a remarkable degree, narrative and syntagmatic. And the old associative options—the *Parilia* and the *Lupercalia* that “bring to mind” Romulus—are now interspersed with truly prescriptive elements: on this date the prince was entitled “father of the nation.”

The perspective offered by Ovid in the *Fasti* is two-directional: on the one hand the prince incorporates his own persona in the new calendar, and on the other he incorporates the origins of Rome in himself. This second process is indicated in a far less explicit and denotative way, but it has great importance for a text that combines reconstruction of the Roman year with antiquarian research. On this second level, it is inevitable that Ovid's readers should encounter Augustus's genealogy, and should evaluate its influence on the traditional calendar. Figures like that of Romulus (and to a lesser degree Aeneas) already have a potentially active role in the collective memory that put together the program for the year. But a change is also coming about in the significance of these founding heroes: it is no longer possible to remember them in an occasional or decentered way. Their physical kinship with Augustus not only ennoble the prince, but makes him the blood relation of the *whole* Roman people (Dio Cassius 44.39.3), and at the same time it shows him as the mirror image of the founding fathers.⁵

From this point of view, Ovid does even more than might be expected of him. His version of the Roman year gives Romulus an unprecedented amount of space, far beyond the “natural” occasions offered by tradition

4. Fraschetti 1990a, 12–13, rightly calls attention to the testimony of Varro about republican festivals, all inscribed in the calendar “because of the gods.”

5. Wagenvoort 1956, 297.

(such as, for example, Romulus's involvement in the foundation myths or in the actual rituals of the *Parilia* or the *Lupercalia*). In the *Fasti*—in the six months of it that we have, it is well to remember—the episodes centering on Romulus are numerous enough to trace out a biography of him, even if by installments. In part the motives for this interest in Romulus are obvious, for a classic narrative method of characterizing a city is to speak of its founder; in part they depend on the cultural climate, because the importance of Romulus also emerges from texts with which Ovid has a programmatic relationship, works regarding Rome's origins like Ennius's *Annales* or Livy's archaeology. But we must insist on the fact that Ovid is not following a preordained path—like that which officially disseminates the various steps of Augustus's career throughout the annual system of anniversaries. The great need for the presence of Romulus does not stem from the calendar itself, but from Augustan discourse. Within this construct, Augustus and Romulus reflect each other, united as they are both by a genealogical line and by a powerful and systematic typology that presents both of them as (a) Father of the nation, Founder, and Guardian; (b) skilled Augur, holder of the *augurium augustum*; (c) bearer of the augural wand (*lituus*); (d) dweller on the Palatine; (e) protagonist of a triple triumph over his enemies; (f) associated with Mars and, naturally, with Quirinus; (g) marked by an identical horoscope;⁶ and (h) destined for the heavens and son of a god.

This network of typological resemblances does not exclude a more intimate, "family" type of appropriation of Romulus: if Augustus can include this mask among those of his ancestors, he can claim to have Romulus's blood running in his veins and thus announce a monopoly that distinguishes him from the many "new Romuli" that Roman political discourse had previously created. And in its turn this shared blood is a logical guarantee of the resemblances between ancestor and descendant.

THREE HUNDRED AND NINE FABII

Before we begin to follow all the great lines of Augustan genealogy, it may be useful to fix a more limited area of reference. We have already noted in passing⁷ that due to its nature as an antiquarian poem the

6. The evidence, problematical, is discussed in Domenicucci 1989, 66–93.

7. See above, pp. 22–23, regarding the genealogy of Callimachus.

Fasti has a particular tendency to open up remote implications by means of family-type connections, a sort of genealogical window through which to enlarge our view of the significance of individual events.⁸ Naturally these implications can function in two directions, backward toward the past and forward to anticipate the future. This mode of thought is so widespread—not only in Roman aristocratic culture, with its cult of ancestors and *imagines* and its programmatic use of names, but also in antiquarianism and historiography in general—that there would be little sense in treating the Augustan genealogical discourse as an isolated phenomenon. Certainly the genealogical strategies used by Augustus constitute a leap forward in quality and in scope, for the end result is a web of family relationships that is able to absorb all Rome's prehistory and history into its own monopoly, and to make of the figure of the prince a definitive synthesis of Rome's history that goes well beyond the sphere of a single *gens*, however great its prestige. But it is more than likely that readers of the time interpreted (and were encouraged to interpret) this strategy as a progressive extension of the traditional family discourse that had always been promoted by the nobility.

There is in fact at least one example in the *Fasti* that illustrates this more typical type of genealogical interest by focusing on an ancient clan that is outside the prince's family, and we may find it useful to examine this in order to create an observation point, from which we can then evaluate the effects of a genealogical strategy that is so much more elaborate and demanding. Let us consider an episode—or, as we shall see, a series of episodes—that concerns the past history of the Fabian *gens*. This family is certainly well qualified for inclusion in a poem about Rome's ancient history, but as it is the only one to enjoy such a privilege in the *Fasti*, it is natural to wonder whether Ovid had a particular motive for this choice. We need not search far for a reason, because an isolated descendant of the Fabii, Paulus Fabius Maximus (consul in 111 B.C.E.) is the most influential of the friends mentioned by Ovid in his letters from exile.⁹ This situation appears to conform to a pattern that is familiar to any scholar of Roman poetry: an illustrious patron, and the occasion for a song of praise.

8. This is a strategy already active in the *Aeneid*, where the style of antiquarianism so typical of Apollonius Rhodius is transformed.

9. See also below, pp. 267 ff.

The *gens Fabia* is in fact deeply involved in a long section of the second book, of which the contents are as follows:

193–94	sacrifices in honor of Faunus on the ides of February;
195–242	the same date commemorates the unfortunate battle of the Cremera, when 306 members of the Fabian family were killed on the same day;
243–66	an astronomical interlude;
267–452	the <i>Lupercalia</i> (15 February);
267–302	the rite and its relationship with the god Faunus;
303–58	the story of Faunus, Hercules, and Omphale;
359–80	Romulus and Remus: the Fabian and Quintilian <i>Luperci</i> ;
381–422	the Lupercal: Romulus and Remus saved by the she-wolf;
423–52	the <i>Lupercalia</i> as a fertility rite;
453–74	the mythical origin of the constellation of the Pisces.

In accordance with a compositional principle that we have already noted under various aspects, this sequence of aetiological themes and stories offers a variety that encourages the reader to be on the watch for analogies and contrasts. The Fabii figure in the sequence as a clan of heroic combatants at the battle of the Cremera (2.195–242), but also as givers of their name to one of the two groups who celebrated the rite of the *Lupercalia*. The story of Romulus and Remus in 2.359–80, right in the middle of the extended picture of the *Lupercalia*, throws light on the antique origin of this division of the priesthood, but at the same time it is an indirect celebration of the supremacy of the Fabian *Luperci* over their rival group. But these connections can proliferate. It has been accurately noted that one central theme recurs in many different sections of the second book: that of the survival of the bloodline.¹⁰ February would almost seem to be the month of crises and difficulties in this continuance. The Fabii are reduced to the brink of extinction, because the massacre of the Cremera leaves only one young member of the family alive (2.437–42); without this survivor, Quintus Fabius Maximus Cunctator would never have been born (nor, more recently, would Ovid's pa-

10. Harries 1991.

tron Paulus Fabius Maximus). But the lives of Romulus and Remus too are at risk in the episode of the Tiber and the she-wolf (2.381–422): their salvation by means of the Lupercal ensures the hopes of a future Rome, which will include in itself the destiny of its families. On another level of the discursive fabric, the *Lupercalia*—the celebration to which the whole sequence 267–452 is devoted—can be seen as a festival that carries profound implications of the concept of fertility. Ovid develops this aspect of the festival in lines 425–52, in which he emphasizes the propitiatory significance of its whiplash ritual: the women must subject themselves to the strokes inflicted by the Luperci in order to become more fecund, and this ceremony goes back to an ancient period of crisis when the young women gave birth to too few children, and a mysterious oracle indicated the lashes of a goatskin whip as a remedy. This link with the past revalues the importance of Faunus as the god of fertility, a signal that not only offers interesting material to modern anthropologists but also provides a common key for a rereading of the preceding stories, those regarding the Fabii and the exposure of Romulus and Remus. In the same way, too, the astronomical passage appended to the picture of the Lupercal (453–72), although apparently unconnected, adds a further contribution, through its aetiology of the Pisces (the myth of Venus taking refuge with the infant Cupid among the reeds of the Euphrates), to the “survival of the bloodline” theme: the fishes in the Euphrates rescue the goddess and her son in the same way as the she-wolf saved the twin babies on the banks of the Tiber.

This is another example of the technique of discontinuity and correlation that we examined in the chapter on “syntagmatic effects.” There may be a discord between epic-style narrative, myth, aetiology, and bawdy story, but they work together in two ways: first on the superficial level of the calendar, and second on a more essential level. Faunus, for example, appears in various roles: he is the god who is honored on the ides (267–68), the god to whom the Lupercal is dedicated, and the Roman version of the Arcadian Pan (271 ff.), but he is also the protagonist of a comic sexual adventure (303 ff.). At this point, we may well ask ourselves whether genealogy has a part to play in this interweaving of ideas: after all, we have now seen that the preservation of the race is a dominating theme in Ovid’s conception of the Lupercal. The compositional structure that we have just traced assigns an important initial role to the episode of the Cremera: this is the last story before the *Lupercalia* proper begins, it is preceded by a distich dedicated to Faunus, and it all hinges on the destiny of the Fabian family. Moreover, in choosing to treat

this subject on 13 February Ovid has made a break with the prevailing tradition, which assigned this anniversary to 18 July (the date of another memorable defeat, that of the Allia).¹¹ The reasons for this distortion of the calendar are still under discussion, but any explanation of it must take into account the fact that 13 February is just one moment in a wider poetic strategy, which extends over all the central part of the second book.

From a genealogical point of view the Fabian family is an interesting one. Its antiquity is attested to by conflicting etymological references. As often happens in the *Fasti*, in the tradition received from a classic Roman antiquarian procedure, all the rival aetiologies are in some way valid, and the poetic text alternates subtly between motivations in its use of this varied substratum.

1. The Fabii descend from Hercules. Ovid strongly affirms this in 2.237, *Herculeae . . . gentis*, and in *Ex Ponto* 3.3.100 he will honor Paulus Fabius Maximus by attributing to him a "Herculean *simplicitas*." The family name is in fact supposed to derive, through the forms *Favi*/*Fovi*, from a *fovea*, or pit, where Hercules made love with the mother of the Fabii.

2. The Fabii descend from Faunus. There is no direct statement of this in any antiquarian source, but it is suggested by various connective characteristics, such as the leading role of the Fabii among the Luperci, the phonetic similarity between *Fau-nus* and the intermediate etymological passage *Favii*, and the surname *Silvanus* that some members of the family bore.

3. The Fabii are great hunters. The founder of their family invented the technique of catching wild beasts with a *fovea* (once again *Favi*, *Favii*, *Fabii*).¹²

What immediately strikes us here is the feat, achieved by Ovid in his first explanatory myth for the *Lupercalia* (303–58), of getting Hercules (genealogy no. 1) and Faunus (genealogy no. 2) into the same bed together. Faunus attempts to take advantage of Omphale by means of a nighttime ambush, but unknown to him the two lovers have exchanged clothes, and in a variation on the farcical ending of Plautus's *Casina*, the god finds himself fondling a horrified Hercules in female dress (and

11. See Harries 1991, 150 n. 1, for the huge bibliography.

12. The documents are in Maltby 1991, 219.

this is why Faunus is now against all clothing, and wants the Luperci to run naked). The reader who still has the Fabii at the back of his mind may wonder whether this improbable and unparalleled explanation for the *Lupercalia* might perhaps be intended as a reminder of the Fabian family's double genealogy. After all, Hercules and Faunus are both going to enjoy the favors of the same woman. Faunus's daring in attempting his nighttime attack on Omphale (331, *quid non amor improbus audet?*) can be seen as a vague anticipation, still in a nonepic register, of the courage shown by the Fabii at the Cremera, while the misunderstanding created by the clothes swapping is a trap that can be compared to the military one set by the Veientes. The parodic style underlines both the correspondence and the distortion between the two episodes, and connects them by means of significant "diagonal" cross-references. At the spiciest moment of the story, when Faunus stretches out his hand to caress Omphale in the darkness and feels Hercules' characteristic lion-skin, he recoils *ut saepe viator / turbatum viso rettulit angue pedem* (341–42: "stunned with alarm he recoiled, the way a startled traveler steps back in panic at the sight of a snake"); on finally touching soft female clothes, he unwittingly hurls himself onto the transvestite Hercules, *et tumidum cornu durius inguen erat* (346, "his tumescent crotch harder than horns"). The assonance *angue/inguen*, a marker of the farcical register, degrades an elevated rhetorical figure, the epic simile of the traveler frightened by a snake used by Virgil in the second book of the *Aeneid*, the same noble source from which Ovid drew almost all the epic-type images that decorate his account of the battle of the Cremera.¹³ The epic destiny of the Trojans, trapped in their flaming city on its last night, is scaled down from the ill-starred advance of the Fabii to the ill-aimed erection of Faunus, the horny.

In genealogical terms, the family's derivation from Hercules and Faunus can give rise both to a reflection and to a warning. Faunus, as the Omphale episode shows, is an instinctive god, and Hercules is a hero who shines for his *simplicitas*. This is the characteristic (a vulnerable one) that Ovid notes in the 306 Fabians doomed to die at the Cremera (2.225–27):

Quo ruitis, generosa domus? male creditis hosti:
simplex nobilitas, perfida tela cave!
Fraude perit virtus.

13. On other distortions of epic models, note Harries 1991, 155.

Where are you rushing, family of blue bloods? You trust your foe too much.
Guileless nobility, beware of treacherous arms!

In all his transport of apostrophe and panegyric, Ovid never forgets to be an insidious poet. *Generosa* is only too apt as an adjective—because the family is noble, it is naturally also generous in standing in for a regular Roman army (cf. 197 ff.), and finally it is prolific (it “generates” lavishly), a quality that has an ironic sound now that 100 percent of its members are about to die. All the possible values of *generosus* are simultaneously applicable. *Simplex* implies the quality inherited from Hercules, while the unstoppable charge through woods and valleys that carries all the Fabii to their death (219–24) recalls Faunus’s unthinking impetus. The young men advance to the banks of the Cremera, which is in flood (the action takes place in winter, according to the date chosen by Ovid, and a river in flood is an appropriate background for the most epic narrative in the *Fasti*).¹⁴ They hurl themselves on their foes like lions on a flock of sheep, but a trap has been laid for them (214, *insidias*). The bait used by their enemies is a clearing defended by only a few soldiers and surrounded by hills and thickets that are suitable for wild beasts (215 ff.). The Fabii rush down the slope like a torrent in full flood, sweeping aside every obstacle in their path, and thus they end up surrounded by their foes: they have no alternative but to stand and fight there and then, with the desperate courage of a wild boar bayed by hounds during a hunt.

“The Fabii fall *improvidi* into the Veientine trap,”¹⁵ and no word could be apter than “trap.” Ovid narrates the whole military operation (in pure epic style) as if it were a hunt, in which the Fabii are seen first as predatory lions and then as helpless boars, and their enemies’ tactics are identical with those of a big game hunter. But we have seen that at the origin of the Fabian family (genealogy no. 3) there is in fact a great hunter, and his invention, the *fovea*, is just the kind of trap that his descendants ought to recognize and avoid, instead of allowing themselves to be pent up in that fatal hollow.

But we can also move away from the family’s origins and orient Ovid’s voice in the direction of his contemporary, Paulus Fabius Maximus. If he too has inherited Hercules’ *simplicitas*, he too may find the Cremera’s lesson in caution profitable. From what we know of him, he is involved in the risky maneuvers of high-level politics.¹⁶ Once again, genealogy

14. More in Barchiesi 1989, 62.

15. Harries 1991, 155.

16. See below, pp. 267–69.

carries its message. The Cremera massacre, Ovid concludes, left a single survivor, with a providential consequence (241–42): *scilicet ut posses olim tu, Maxime, nasci / cui res cunctando restituenda foret* (“plainly in order that you, Maximus, one day could be born to rescue the state by your delaying”).

The episode closes with a pentameter that is a concentrated version of Ennius’s illustrious model (*Ann.* 363 Sk.): *unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem*.

Unus has been skillfully transferred to the preceding line (240), *unus de Fabia gente relictus erat*. One sole day has destroyed the family (235–36, *una dies . . . una dies*) whose aim was to save Rome, but one Fabian, only one, remains alive, so that a unique savior, Quintus Fabius Maximus the Delayer, can be born. This noble figure is presented in the words of Ennius, which Virgil had already borrowed for the solemn moment when Anchises concludes his review of the heroes (*Aen.* 6.845–46): *Quo fessum rapitis, Fabii? Tu Maximus ille es / unus qui nobis cunctando restituis rem*.

The Fabian family will produce a Maximus, a man who will be the greatest. The words *Quo . . . rapitis*, even if this is not what Anchises intends by them, could be interpreted as an indication of the characteristic impetus—Faunesque, Lupercalian—of the Fabii. The surname *Maximus* in this context identifies the *Cunctator* as the greatest representative of his clan, and the repetition of *nobis* (in homage to Ennius) gives the reader the impression—in the very last line of this great parade—that Anchises already feels himself to be a Roman, and as a Roman is anticipating Ennius. “One man alone saved us by delaying”: the construction of Ovid’s narrative shows that this lesson in caution descends in a straight line from the incautious disaster of the Cremera, when the Fabii still paid too little attention to the origins of their name.

But Ovid has omitted this *nobis*, and in contrast with Virgil’s apostrophe (*tu Maximus ille es*) the great Fabius is here addressed in the vocative (*tu, Maxime*). What comes to mind is that this kind of address could also be used for a living person. This could be a great compliment paid to the man who is almost the exact namesake of Hannibal’s great adversary, and perhaps also a specific acknowledgment, or an exhortation. The omission of *nobis* makes *res* interpretable not only as *res publica* but also in more private terms. The idea might be that Paulus’s task is to restore the patrimony and the power of his family (a typical issue for the aristocracy under Augustus), and Ovid is recommending, or holding up to him as a mirror image, the example of the *Cunctator*. In fact the noble family

of the Fabii has often risked extinction over the centuries, and this Fabius brings off a master stroke by getting married, at a rather advanced age perhaps (therefore a new Delayer?), but to a kinswoman of Augustus's.¹⁷ A more daring projection of Ovid's sentence can however be traced. The great Fabius *Maximus* had saved Rome through his caution, and Ennius's (and Virgil's) classic line is readapted by Augustus in a complimentary letter to Tiberius: "Everyone who has been with you declares that the famous line '*unus qui nobis cunctando restituis rem*' is applicable to you."¹⁸ In the last years of Augustus's reign, Paulus Fabius Maximus comes to the fore as Tiberius's principal opponent, and his ambitions are perhaps of the highest level. Before his venture comes to an end (as it will do abruptly), Ovid might well wish him, under cover of a classical quotation, a future destiny as the man who will reenact the Delayer's great services to Rome and rescue the nation (and Ovid?) from an unacceptable regime—naturally by using caution. Nothing can be proved, but if Paulus looks back over his family album, the *exempla* there have a great deal to tell him, not only in terms of rigid prescription but also by making up a network of alternative modes of behavior and of still open possibilities. There is no need to think that the language of genealogy is simple and transparent.

FAMILY LIKENESS

If we agree that ancestors have the power of obliquely characterizing their descendants, the *Fasti* offers various fruitful openings from the past into more recent times. As a result of the patrician structure of Roman society, the concepts of the importance of common blood—and of the continuity of the family as an identifying feature of its individual members—are handed down over the centuries. The family images are jealously preserved not only out of a neutral ancestor-respect but as part of a strategy of retrospective mobility.¹⁹ Both the behavior and the temperament of the descendants act as a convincing proof of what their parents had been before them: glory, for example, is a hereditary attribute, but it is also a quality that can be reflected backward, from the present toward

17. As argued by Harries 1991, 160–61. On the honorific placing of Fabius's wife at the very end of *Fasti* 6, see below, p. 267.

18. Suet. *Tib.* 21.

19. On the relevance of "blood" in Roman culture, Guastella 1985, 83–84, 97 ff.; on the contextual value of genealogic reconstructions, always open to renegotiation, see Bertini 1986, 189–90.

the past. This tradition is of crucial importance to late Augustan discourse, with the increasing urgency of the need to build up around the figure of the aging prince a cohesive family context and a patrimony of ideals to be handed down to his heirs. The family album is based on the premise that descendants and successors (with all the various shades of meaning imposed by Augustus's strategy of adoptions) effectively "resemble" their progenitor. There is more than one path open to the prince: he can recuperate the aristocratic ideology of the *imagines* and of the "bloodline," or he can adopt criteria of a more charismatic or numinous nature. Meanwhile, the figure of Livia, too, undergoes a process of transformation, as she becomes ever more "Augusta," ever more caught up in her husband's dynastic and genealogical strategy. In his turn, the prince is reflected in the figures of the founding fathers of his aristocratic clan, so eloquently present among the statues in the new Imperial Forum:²⁰ here again he can operate on two levels, because Aeneas and Romulus occupy a focal position between the public and the private spheres, between Rome's national identity and the continuing history of the Julian family. At the same time, increased importance is given to the divine blood contributed by the *cognata numina*. At the center of this ever more impregnable web of relationships, Augustus acts as a simultaneous guarantee of his descendants and his ancestors, and the model figures in his genealogy (Aeneas, Romulus, and up to a point Julius Caesar) project their own exemplary qualities onto him. The double nature of this link, which concerns both the family's continuity and its public function in relation to the *res publica*, is a typical trademark of Augustan discourse, which is founded on a flexible interchange between the traditional registers of the private and the public spheres. And in this case, any antiquarian discourse is charged with new responsibilities.

Confronting this problem *in corpore vili*, that is, as it affects himself personally, Ovid the private citizen reminds us that the vertical line of genealogy can give rise to ironic effects. After illustrating the special cult of Mars among the Italians, Ovid concedes a brief mention to the people from whom he himself descends: *tibi cum proavis, miles Paeligne, Sabinis* (3.95). These two character traits—martial bellicosity and kinship with the Sabines—go well together, but they are in sharp contrast with the image of himself that the poet constantly presents in his works. The Pelignian Naso is a knight for merits that have nothing to do with the military sphere (as he emphatically explains in *Fasti* 4.383), he has care-

20. Zanker 1988, 210 ff.

fully avoided an army career, and the values of which he sings are hardly compatible with those of Mars and the austere Sabina. But Ovid, of course, has no need to project himself into the antique past. Things are very different in the case of a prince who derives his origins and his model from the first and foremost of Rome's indigenous heroes, Romulus.

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF A FOUNDER

The stories about Romulus in the *Fasti* are so haphazardly distributed and prompted by such various occasions that the following brief table may be helpful:

III	2.361 ff.	Romulus and Remus against the brigands (aetiology of the <i>Lupercalia</i>);
II	2.383 ff.	the twins in the river (the <i>Lupercalia</i> again);
VII	2.481 ff.	apotheosis of Romulus/Quirinus: <i>Quirinalia</i> ;
I	3.111 ff.	the twins are conceived (Mars and the month of March);
VI	3.179 ff.	rape of the Sabines (festival of Mars on the calends);
IV	4.809 ff.	foundation of Rome on the <i>Parilia</i> and death of Remus;
V	5.451 ff.	Remus's ghost (connected with the origin of the <i>Lemuria</i>).

The Roman numbers in the left-hand column show the correct order of the individual segments in the chronological sequence of the myth. With the addition of various other shorter quotations, these stories almost make up a biography of the founder.²¹ If however we number the individual segments according to the order they should occupy in the traditional chronology (the chronology that derives from Ennius, for example, and which is used to put the Ennian fragments in order), we ob-

21. Heinze 1960, 325 n. 24, argues that the poet had invested in books 1 to 6 almost all of his narrative material on Romulus, and that it is legitimate to ask whether *Fasti* 7–12 was actually a feasible work, since the first six books had exhausted a great part of the available myths. However, the text we have anticipates not less than two episodes of the Romulan history as forthcoming in the second hexad, the rape of the Sabines that “will” be reported by the god Consus during the *Consualia* (cf. 3.189–90: that is, in August) and the story about Faustus and Acca Larentia reserved for the December *Larentalia* (3.55–58). It is noteworthy that those two anticipations are found in a compass of 150 lines.

tain this bewildering sequence: III–II–VII–I–VI–IV–V. The elements in the biographical sequence have been shuffled like a pack of cards. Perhaps by chance (and perhaps not), the beginning of the story, the twins' conception and birth, is placed in the middle, and is both preceded and followed by three other episodes. None of the passages, except for the last two, appear in chronological order. Even more strikingly, the time scheme of Ovid's narrative (and that of the year that Ovid is interpreting) makes Romulus die and ascend to the skies (end of the second book) only to be born immediately afterward (beginning of the third book). We may remember that in *Metamorphoses* 9 Hercules dies and ascends to the skies (259–72) and that this story is immediately followed, to the reader's surprise, by an account of the strange circumstances of his birth (273–323).

Naturally this dispersion can be accounted for by a simple return to calendrical order. The Roman year is not structured along the sort of diegetical axis by which the exemplary story of some sacred narrative might be followed in a linear movement from one festival to another. It is obvious that the various occasions that entailed a commemoration of Romulus had no likelihood of coinciding with any kind of linear plan. But even if this had been possible, we have a clear demonstration in the *Metamorphoses* that Ovid would all the same have avoided any kind of linear or predictable order in the construction of his narrative. Moreover, it would be inexact to say that all the segments of the story are determined to the same extent by liturgical occasions. Let us take two contrasting examples: there is a strong traditional connection (even if this is not exactly compulsory: see p. 000 above) between the *Parilia* and the foundation of Rome; but the idea of tracing the *Lemuria* back to Remus (see p. 121 above) is an isolated—and unbelievable—initiative on Ovid's part. The impression we receive is that Ovid has used a series of suggestions offered by the tradition, not all of which are connected with the calendar, but that he has also multiplied them and given them added emphasis: it is clear that Romulus and his destiny must have a particular importance for the project of the *Fasti*.

ROMULUS LEARNS TO LAUGH . . .

Romulus's first appearance in this *ordo artificiosus* is occasioned by a rather minor episode in his career. While naked, Romulus and Remus successfully thwart an attempt at cattle rustling and in this way provide an *aition* (albeit a rather problematic one) for the Lupercalian ritual.

Historians of Roman poetry can find Ovid's presentation of the twin brothers interesting for more than one reason (2.365–68):

Romulus et frater pastoralisque iuventus
solibus et campo corpora nuda dabant.
Caestibus et iaculis et misso pondere saxi
bracchia per lusus experienda dabant.

Romulus and his brother and his youthful band of shepherds were giving their naked bodies exercise in the sun. They were putting their arms to tests of strength with fencing foils, and javelins, and throwing stones.

The pastoral and athletic atmosphere of the scene accounts for a central feature of the aetiology (the Luperci run naked because at that time the twins too happened to be naked, as they were engaged in their games when . . .), but it also offers Ovid the occasion for an essay in “old-style” writing. The twins are indulging in a healthy (*solibus et campo*) and competitive form of amusement, as befits the representatives of a simple and heroic era. The image corresponds clearly with the vigorous Italy shown in the *Georgics* (2.531–34):

corporaque agresti nudant praedura palaestra.
Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini,
hanc Remus et frater; sic fortis Etruria crevit
scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma.

They undress their bodies hardened in the country exercise. This was the lifestyle once practiced by the ancient Sabini, by Remus and his brother; this way strong Etruria grew, and this way, clearly, Rome has become the wonder of the world.

In the light of this parallel, Ovid's *Romulus et frater* (2.365) has the air of a useful little correction. Virgil's *Remus et frater* is amended to a more regular mode of expression. The first place, and the honor of a mention, belongs to the more important and the more fortunate of the two brothers. In Virgil, to tell the truth, the designation of the pair as *Remus et frater* alludes to a latent tension. The conclusion of *Georgics* 2 gives some space to the theme of the fratricide (496, 510) and Virgil does not shrink from the task of handling this dark side of Rome's origins, the violence that is already inscribed in the city's foundation. At this point in the book's conclusion, the mention of Remus may well introduce an almost metaphysical hint of a possible reconciliation: concord between the brothers—belied by the immediate outcome—was able to exist in the constructive climate of pastoral Rome, and it is to be symbolically reestablished in the restoration promised by Augustus, a Rome with no more

fratricide: *Remo cum fratre Quirinus / iura dabunt* (*Aen.* 1.292–93).²² Ovid eliminates this scruple and more realistically gives the first place to the winner.

But this exercise in calling up Rome's origins also involves an Ennian model. Comparable episodes can be found in the fragments of *Annales* 1, and one fragment in particular appears relevant to the same picture (69–70 Sk.): *pars ludicre saxa / iactant inter se licitantur*.

On the grounds of this particular passage from the *Fasti*, it has been reasonably posited that Ennius had already narrated the story of a shepherds' festival interrupted by cattle thieves.²³ I would say that this model may also have influenced the *Georgics* passage on the open-air life of *Remus et frater*.²⁴ If Ovid has Ennius behind him,²⁵ it is interesting to note the pattern of these two consecutive pentameters (366, 368): *solibus et campo corpora nuda dabant; brachia per lusum experienda dabant*. The effect of monotony may have been deliberately produced to function as a link between the edifying content and the style of Ovid's model.

Another fragment of Ennius's poem suggests that Ovid might be imitating and transforming a whole narrative sequence. Here Romulus is presented as victorious over the rustlers:²⁶ *occiduntur. Ubi potitur ratus Romulus praedam . . .* ("They were killed. When Romulus, successful (?), takes the booty . . .").

In fact, Skutsch suggests boldly, but on the basis of sound arguments, that *ratus* is to be interpreted as "successful(ly)" just as *irritus* is used to mean "unsuccessfully, in vain."²⁷ *Irritus* is in fact the very adjective that is applied to Romulus in our Ovidian narrative—because in

22. The line is echoed at *Fasti* 3.61, *Iliadae fratres iura petita dabant*, immediately before a reference to Remus's murder: see Stok 1991, 208.

23. Spangenberg was the first to suggest this reconstruction: Skutsch 1985, 219: a good clue is the similarity of *Fasti* 2.367, *misso pondere saxi*, to *saxa iactant* at Enn. *Ann.* 70 Sk.

24. Skutsch 1985, 219, points to Verg. *Aen.* 6.642–43, but the relevance of the *Georgics* passage, where the times of Romulus are explicitly mentioned, is superior to that of the vision of the afterlife in *Aeneid* 6.

25. Besides the similarity of *Fasti* 2.367, *misso pondere saxi*, to Enn. *Ann.* 70 Sk. (above, n. 23), we can observe that *caestibus* (2.367 again) is comparable to fr. LI Sk. (Romulus), *sic ludos edidit ut caestibus dimicarent*. Mention of boxing contests in prehistorical Rome is unexpected, and even if there are problems (*caestibus* in that fragment is a conjecture, and the situation referred to cannot be overlapping with the period in which Ovid locates the *Lupercalia* episode) Skutsch 1985, 242, is well founded in suspecting that Ovid can have contaminated more than one episode from the Ennian narrative about Romulus.

26. With *praeda* one might compare Livy 1.4.9.

27. Skutsch 1985, 221. One might try to support this with Prop. 4.10.14 (about a success in Romulus's career), *votis . . . ratis*.

Ovid the successful brother, for once in his life, is Remus, that Remus who according to an ancient source owes his very name to the concept of slowness (*remora*), a name for one who eternally arrives in second place (2.375–76):²⁸ *Venit irritus illuc / Romulus et mensas ossaque nuda videt* (“Thwarted, Romulus returned to bare tables and bare bones”).

Romulus misses both the victory over the bandits²⁹ and the sacrificial banquet: Remus and his Fabii have been too quick for him and have left him nothing but the bones to gnaw. Remus’s victory and Romulus’s defeat become even more remarkable if this, as all things lead one to think, is an isolated initiative on Ovid’s part and if—as good clues would suggest—the story is in contrast with a pro-Romulus version proposed by Ennius’s *Annales*. And at this point we must not overlook the way in which Ovid’s Romulus reacts to his defeat (2.377–78): *Risit, et indoluit Fabios potuisse Remumque / vincere, Quintilios non potuisse suos* (“He laughed, but still he was stung that Remus and the Fabians could win, but not his own Quintilians”).

Most modern commentators take it for granted that Romulus’s reaction is that of a good loser: “una ragazzata”; “Romulus fasst es nicht tragisch auf”; “un petit pincement de coeur”; “Romulus’s rueful laughter is at his own slowness, without resentment at the trick, which he takes in good part.”³⁰ These comments seem to be based on two general assumptions: first, that the episode must necessarily be read as the aetiology of the *Lupercalia*,³¹ and second, that a didactic poem like the *Fasti* cannot have anything resembling a plot. If there is no plot, the verb *indoluit* cannot have any importance; only *risit* is significant, because it provides a more than evident cause for the laughter that characterizes the mysterious rite of the *Lupercalia*.

Nevertheless there is no reason why we should see *risit et indoluit* as a sort of hendiadys, the sum of which equals “Romulus did not mind

28. *Or. gent. Rom.* 2.1.4: *Remus . . . a tarditate, quippe talis naturae homines ab antiquis remores dici.*

29. The borderline between cattle theft and recovery is rather unclear in pastoral societies. In texts like Fest. 496 L. and Eutrop. 1.1.2 the ambiguity between the two activities in the myth of the twins are in full evidence. I wonder whether the hyperbaton *Romule, praedones, et Reme* (2.370) is entirely innocent.

30. So respectively Sabbatucci 1988, 54; Heinze 1960, 329; Duval 1972, 208; Fantam 1983, 190.

31. About this aetiology see Porte 1985, 48 n. 43, quoting Binder 1964, 96 ff.; Sabbatucci 1988, 54. Porte 1984, 284 ff., adds a speculation on the historical context: the victory of Fabii over Quintilii could have a special impact after the autumn of 9 c.e., when a Quintilius had led a Roman army to defeat in the forest of Teutoburg. This kind of allegorical interpretation creates, unfortunately, an atmosphere of mistrust around anyone who addresses the relationship of Ovid to Augustus.

very much." The simplest explanation is that *risit* indicates his external reaction—with its precise aetiological function—and *indoluit* what Romulus actually felt—or rather, began to feel—when he was cheated of his share. The idea that Romulus "does not make a tragedy of it" is only valid for *risit*, that is, for his social behavior; but in the perspective of the narrative *indoluit* has a far greater value. If we are prepared to see the episode as part of a reconstruction of the lives of Romulus and Remus, and not merely as a mythical digression connected with the causes of the *Lupercalia*, then the expressions "ragazzata" and "petit pincement de coeur" are reductive descriptions of Romulus's reactions.

The verb *indolesco* is used elsewhere by Ovid for those stifled and rancorous passions that the goddess Juno is such a specialist in (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.36): *senserat hoc . . . distuleratque graves in idonea tempora poenas . . . indoluit* (*Met.* 2.466 ff.). The goddess's behavior here is based on her traditional image as a great hater, but as is typical in the universe of the *Metamorphoses*, it also evokes the dangerous qualities of the holders of power: rancors stored up for the opportune moment, delayed-action revenges. If we read *indoluit* in this light, *risit* too has something troubling about it: are we perhaps to conclude that Romulus, Rome's future king, has some kind of tendency toward simulation and duplicity? We can hardly help feeling that Remus, both in historical time and in the time scheme of Ovid's plot, is bound to come to a sticky end and will be cheated of much more than a few pieces of roasted goat's meat. "Noblemen," Servius generalizes ad *Aen.* 12.830, "even if they seem to forgive for the moment, nevertheless save up their wrath for the future." Romulus, who has managed to deceive so many modern critics with his laughter, must have blue blood in his veins.

... AND TO WEEP

And this is soon to be confirmed, for the "objective" cycle of the year is relentlessly carrying Ovid's readers toward the moment of the fratricide.

Duplicity and (dis)simulation reappear, in far greater evidence, in the next episode, that of the death of Remus, and here it is more difficult to deny that the narrative, with its subtle effects, is taking considerable risks. If we keep in mind the tension that we have just noted in the *Lupercalia* episode (Romulus's first appearance in the kaleidoscopic narrative of the *Fasti*, and thus perhaps a thematic foretaste of what is to come later), we shall find certain aspects of the story particularly striking.

In the light of the available traditions regarding Remus's death, we

could expect Ovid to choose between two alternative strategies, very clearly distinct one from the other: one that exonerates Romulus from the deed of fratricide, and one that makes him act on a momentary impulse.³² In the former version, which we find well represented in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Remus is killed by one of Romulus's subordinates, Celer. Remus jumps over the line of the walls with a derisive comment ("an enemy would jump over them easily—just look at me!"), thus provoking the "overseer" Celer to a violent reaction. Dionysius himself considers this line of argument, which is objectively pro-Romulan, the least convincing. The greater part of the tradition, already starting with Ennius,³³ makes a quarrel between the brothers about the walls easily foreseeable. On a first reading, Ovid appears to follow the fragile "defensive" tradition: Remus makes an ironic remark about the walls (4.842, *his populus . . . tutus erit*), jumps over them, and is killed by Celer, with a rapidity appropriate to his bizarre name. But a detail is present here that is missing in other testimonies; it was *Romulus* who decreed that whoever crossed the wall was to die (4.839–40): *neve quis aut muros aut factam vomere fossam / transeat, audentem talia dede neci* ("no one shall cross the walls or the trench I plough: put to death whoever presumes such a thing").

Through ignorance of this edict, Remus goes to meet his death. Certainly, one may think that Ovid wants to give some rational motive for Celer's behavior, which in Dionysius's version sounds like an arbitrary abuse of power. On the other hand, there was at least something of the casual and impulsive in that version: if Romulus has appointed a man called Celer to protect the walls, it is hardly surprising that the situation should quickly get out of hand. To ignore this name's potentialities, and to exculpate Celer, means—in the very version that at first sight is most favorable to him—bringing Romulus back into the picture: in the place of the "censored" fratricide, here are hints of a role that is not so very different from that of "instigator." Besides, the motives for his edict (by which an unforeseeable event is transformed into a whole series of legal cases, requiring laws to cover not only the wall during the process of building, or the completed wall, but even the trench in which it is going to be built; cf. l. 840) remain somewhat mysterious. The walls are sacred, it is true. But the situation, already far from straightforward, seems to

32. For contemporary analysis of the saga I refer to Binder 1964; Cornell 1975; Bremmer and Horsfall 1987, 25–48.

33. Skutsch 1985, 238–41.

me to be aggravated by an allusive element that highlights line 840. *Dede neci* is not a common mode of expression in Augustan poetry,³⁴ and its most direct precedent is in Virgil (G. 4.88–90):

Verum ubi ductores acie revocaveris ambo
deterior qui visus, eum, ne prodigus obsit,
dede neci: melior vacua sine regnet in aula.

What should one do, runs Virgil's argument, when the bees have two kings (4.67–68, *nam saepe duobus / regibus incessit magno dicordia motu*; cf. Ovid *Fasti* 3.556, *amisso dubiae rege vagantur apes*)? Kill the inferior one, the weaker of the two, is the poet's blunt advice: the better one must reign alone. This, in fact, is the problem that arises in Ovid's infant Rome: there are two potential kings (4.810—the introduction to our story—*pastorum gemino sub duce volgus erat*). In one way or another, only one of the two must remain: and Romulus's edict, so apparently innocent on the surface level of the narrative, obtains this precise political effect, clearing the way for an undisturbed monarchy (reactions to this foundation myth could vary according to preferences for living either under a consular dyarchy or under a monarchy dressed up as a "princiate"). The dynastic motive that Cicero, with an eye on Caesar's increasing power, had so crudely exposed (*Off.* 3.41: *species enim utilitatis animum pepulit eius [sc. Romuli]: cui cum visum esset utilius solum quam cum altero regnare, fratrem interemit*) does not come to the surface in Ovid's text, but is delegated to the Virgilian intertext. The feelings of guilt nourished for many years by the first Augustan generation—all of us must make amends for the civil war and Romulus's original sin—have disappeared, but they return in the form of a literary allusion, and this allusion keeps alive that suspicion of hypocrisy that the *Lupercalia* scene had already suggested. The story of a lasting and stifled hatred would be a strange way of absolving Romulus from the accusation of having killed his own brother in an outburst of anger.³⁵

This duplicity reappears in Romulus's reaction to his brother's death, even if it takes an unexpected direction. We discover that in Romulus

34. In Ovid only *Her.* 14.125 again. Such a straightforward order has no parallel in other versions: the less incompatible version, Diodorus 8.5–6 (accessible only in excerpts), goes as follows: Romulus is already angry for Remus's provocations, and nevertheless what he recommends is to punish, not to execute, whoever should trespass the wall (see Heinze 1960, 330 n. 37; Krämer 1965, 393 n. 108).

35. According to Krämer 1965, 367, Ovid has "canceled every human failure" and flattened the difficulties of the traditional saga, to produce "a sense of peace and conciliation."

there is a public image and a private reality—but in a positive sense, of course.³⁶ In Livy's version of the story, Romulus uttered a ferocious threat, then and there in hot blood, just before killing his brother: *sic deinde quicumque alius transiliet moenia mea* (1.7.2). Ovid's Romulus, who is innocent of the crime, manages to repeat these words, but in the form of a retrospective comment: "*sic*" *que* "*meos muros transeat hostis*" *ait* (4.848: *sic* is pronounced both by the narrator and by the character!), and Livy's model seems to have taken on a certain air of cynicism. Except that (here is the justification given by the omniscient narrator) Romulus only spoke in this harsh way in order to appear strong, while inwardly he was a prey to human feelings of grief (4.845–47):

haec ubi rex didicit, lacrimas introrsus obortas
devorat et clausum pectore volnus habet.
Flere palam non volt exemplaue fortia servat. . . .

When the king found out, he choked back the tears welling up inside, and kept the hurt locked in his heart. He didn't want to weep openly and he kept up a brave front. . . .

At the precise moment when he becomes king (and is called *rex* for the first time) of a city that from then on will be named after him,³⁷ our hero shows a capacity for self-control that is no novelty to readers of Roman poetry. An exemplary pre-Roman hero, Aeneas, has already demonstrated that a leader, however great his inward sufferings, must not give way to his emotions. In certain contexts it is absolutely necessary to simulate: *spem voltu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem* (*Aen.* 1.209). Passion may rage in the heart, but there are no outward signs of it: *magno persentit pectore curas. / Mens immota manet* (4.448–49). Even the tears due to such a great sorrow as the death of Dido can be postponed: with remarkable self-control, Aeneas (who has some reason for feeling guilty) manages to refrain from weeping for the woman who died for love of him until he sees her in the *Lugentes Campi* (6.468).³⁸

36. Krämer 1965 views the situation as a "deepening of the human and spiritual dimension," "a new ideal center, the dimension of inwardness," plus the expression of a "deeply felt tension" (368): to Ovid, Romulus is "a problematical human being, strangely fragmented."

37. According to Enn. *Ann.* 77 Sk., a success of Remus would have entailed the foundation of "Remora" (above, n. 28): the name foregrounds its own removal, because *remora* is associated with "stumbling block, deferral" and Roma is inseparable not only from Romulus but from *rhōmē*, "strength."

38. This neat observation in Krämer 1965, 372–73, is a private suggestion by Friedrich Klingner. The idea that "Greats do not weep" has a long history: e.g. Eur. *Iph. Aul.* 446–48; Enn. *Scenica* 228 V.

Ovid's treatment of this stoic-type paradigm is somewhat mannered: the physical imagery of *introrsus devorat* (4.845 ff.) places a strain on the reader, and *clausum pectore* (846) is more suggestive of duplicity than of emotive stability: for Roman culture, there are dangerous connotations to this picture of inwardness.³⁹ I want to insist that this connection between Romulus and Aeneas is grounded not only on intertextuality but also on a genealogical line; not only is Romulus a replica (or parody) of that Aeneas who suffers but does not reveal his feelings, but he is also his descendant. We shall meet this link again in a little while.

As in the *Lupercalia* episode, Romulus distinguishes himself for his ability to postpone and to simulate, and this time what the mask hides is a moving brotherly affection: his tears, like those of Aeneas, are only postponed (4.849–52):

dat tamen exsequias; nec iam suspendere fletum
sustinet, et pietas dissimulata patet;
osculaque adplicit posito suprema feretro
atque ait: "Invito frater adempte, vale!"

But as he conducted the funeral, no longer able to hold back the tears, he revealed his hidden devotion. He pressed the last kisses on the body placed on its bier and said, "Farewell, brother taken against my will."

It is not easy to understand the real thoughts of a man such as this. A dissimulated *pietas* that nonetheless shines through is more effective than an openly displayed *pietas*: the important thing is never to allow one's feelings to be completely revealed (cf. A.A. 2.311: *tantum, ne pateas verbis simulator in illis effice*). What is really extraordinary is that after the most horrifying episode in his life—the moment in which according to the prevailing tradition Romulus *omisit* . . . *et pietatem et humanitatem* (Cic. Off. 3.41)—the survivor should bid farewell to his brother with the heartrending and unforgettable words used by the elegiac poet Catullus in weeping obsessively and inconsolably over his own loss (68.19–20, 91–92: *O misero frater adempte mihi* . . . *ei misero frater adempte mihi*; 101.6, 10: *heu miser indigne frater adempte mihi* . . . *atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale!*).⁴⁰ This is such an unlikely

39. Note Sall. *Cat.* 10.5 and Traina and Bini 1986, 27.

40. Hinds 1992, 147–48, is the first to exploit the interpretive potential of this marvelous allusion (registered without comment in Krämer 1965, 398 n. 139). It could be objected, in classic "Heinzian" terms of reference, that Romulus behaves like Catullus because this is an elegiac Romulus, who respects the mild and sentimental genre where he has found hospitality. The whole of my chapter (necessarily, a long one) is an alternative to this traditional approach.

parallel⁴¹ that it suggests a second way of reading the passage, in a hypocritical vein, which could turn line 850 upside down; with a slight amendment to the spacing we could read: *sustinet, et pietas dis simulata patet*—"and his simulated piety revealed itself to the gods."⁴² However we look at this detail, Ovid's Romulus surprises us. His main characteristic is not an archaic brutality (the traditional accusation proposed by this far from limpid foundation myth) but an icy and subtle quality, a capacity for self-control that confuses the reader's ideas and reminds him of the virtues of a modern Roman leader. A Romulus who speaks like the elegiac Catullus is certainly not a character in the archaic mold; but nonetheless he is creating *exempla* for all the Romans to come and for the man who will have to rule over them.

AT HOME WITH AENEAS

Taking us backward along the genealogical line, the *Fasti* offers us an interesting parallel in a glimpse of the domestic life of Aeneas and Lavinia. In 3.601 ff. the *pious Aeneas* has an unexpected encounter on the shores of Latium—with poor Anna.⁴³ Dido has died, and Aeneas gives free rein to the tears so often held back: *flet tamen admonitu motus, Elissa, tui*. Ovid puts into his mouth a brief speech of commemoration for Dido, which includes this symptomatic retrospective comment (3.617–18): *Nec timui de morte tamen: metus afuit iste. / Ei mihi, credibili fortior illa fuit!* ("But I wasn't afraid for her life. Anxiety about that was remote. Oh, she was braver than I could have believed!").

As in the story of Romulus, the example of self-control is significant. In his Virgilian model, the story of Aeneas's meeting with Dido in the Underworld, Ovid has immediately picked out the expression that has made Aeneas odious to so many generations of critics and ordinary readers (*Aen.* 6.464–65): *nec credere quivi / hunc tantum tibi me discessu ferre dolorem*; "there is deep self-questioning behind what seem to

41. *Invito*, clearly impossible in the original situation of the Catullan elegy, guarantees the additional presence of Aeneas's understatement in the Underworld: the words *invitus, regina* (another Catullan *Pathosformel*, by the way) were Aeneas's attempt to negotiate the responsibility of having turned Dido into a ghost.

42. One might try to add the ambiguities of word division to the criteria for wordplay argued for by Ahl 1985.

43. For bibliography on the episode and its Virgilian models, see above, part 1, n. 17; on the motivation of Aeneas's barefoot walk at 3.604 see my comments, Barchiesi 1995.

us strangely insensitive words.”⁴⁴ *Credibili fortior* is even stronger than *nec credere quivi* and transforms its retrospective incredulity into a sort of cold calculation of the odds.

Naturally, Aeneas's behavior toward Anna is impeccable. His “*nil non debemus Elissae*” (3.623) honors, if somewhat mechanically, the promise made in *Aen.* 4.334–35, “*numquam, regina negabo / promeritam, nec me meminisse pigebit Elissae*.” When he introduces Anna to his wife Lavinia, he very tactfully avoids any mention of Dido (problems of retrospective jealousy), reminds her of the economic advantages afforded by Carthaginian hospitality (630, *consumpsi naufragus huius opes*) and of Anna's exalted social position (631, *regnum . . . possedit*), and finally recommends that Lavinia should love her like a sister (632: an unexpected addition to the Virgilian plan which makes Lavinia replace Dido). Meanwhile a materialistic undercurrent begins to seep into the story. Anna arrives wearing sumptuous Oriental robes (627, *Tyrios induta paratus*) and sends Aeneas costly presents (635–36): we get the impression that Aeneas has not done so well for himself in this primitive and agricultural Latium as he had in Troy or Carthage.

We can understand Lavinia's jealousy. The story of a love affair between Aeneas and Anna was already circulating before the *Aeneid* was written.⁴⁵ And the readers of Virgil certainly remember a suggestive hint to the effect that there was already a particular understanding between the two of them during the Carthage period (*Aen.* 4.421 ff.). Lavinia's reaction is murderous, and the interesting thing is that it is immediately accompanied by dissimulation (*Fasti* 3.633–38):

omnia promittit, falsumque Lavinia volnus [like Romulus in 4.846]
 mente premit tacita dissimulatque metus;
 donaque cum videat praeter sua lumina ferri
 multa palam, mitti clam quoque multa putat.
 Non habet exactum quid agat: furialiter odit
 et parat insidias et cupit ulta mori.

Lavinia agrees completely, but conceals an imagined injury in her heart and silently masks her anxiety. When she sees Anna giving many gifts in her

44. Austin 1977 ad loc., giving a voice to the reluctance of many readers, especially, but not only, the ones schooled in (post-)Romanticism.

45. We should not undervalue the testimony that Varro, before Virgil, had a meeting and a love story between Aeneas and Anna (Serv. Dan. ad *Aen.* 4.682; Serv. ad *Aen.* 5.4) and perhaps Virgil, when he depicts Anna as very sensitive to the amorous intrigue, gives us an implicit gloss on the tradition that was transformed and ultimately silenced by the *Aeneid*. On the reasons for accepting the testimony as genuine pre-Virgilian tradition see D'Anna 1989, 159–96 (with bibliography).

presence, still she thinks many more were sent in secret. She doesn't know just what to do. Her hatred is fiendish: she plans a trap and longs to die, but avenged.

Her jealousy is understandable: Aeneas is rather too easily attracted by rich and powerful women, and he might bring off a new marriage (the third!) for motives of material gain (Anna is the legitimate heir of the Carthaginian royal family), and anyway, as comedy teaches us, the husband of an *uxor dotata* is generally inclined to have a roving eye. Readers of the *Aeneid* remember Lavinia as a virginal and rather reserved character, given to unexplained blushes, but here we have something quite different. Ovid's text selects Virgilian models that point toward other characters in the *Aeneid*. As passionate as Dido, but more practical, Lavinia *cupit ulta mori* (as against *Aen.* 4.659, *moriemur inultae*). But Lavinia is also the daughter of no ordinary mother, a queen who is capable of violent passions and hatreds, who had even been visited by a Fury of evil. *Furialiter* (the word is not found anywhere else in the Latin that has come down to us) *odit* is a gloss on this family likeness. Virgil had used a whole collection of similar epithets in narrating the story of Amata's fury (*Aen.* 7.348, *furibunda*; 350, *furentem*; 375, *furiale malum*; 377, *furit*; 386, *furorem*; 389, *fremens*; 392, *furiis*; 12.601, *furorem*; and then in 12.607 the band of women, led by the timid Lavinia, *furit* in mourning for her mother's death). Dido too (who as we know resembles Amata in several ways) is reevoked in the image of the deep wound: *tacitum vivit sub pectore volnus* (4.67; *volnus . . . caeco igni*, 4.2). But the real novelty in Ovid's picture is Lavinia's capacity for dignified self-control, which makes her a worthy wife for Aeneas (*mente premit tacita dissimulatque*), and also an important link in the family chain that goes from the repressed Aeneas to the tortuous Romulus—or perhaps even further forward in the dynasty of Rome's founding fathers?

BUILDING UP THE DYNASTY

The tendency to treat Ovid's account of Rome's origins as pure storytelling, devoid of any responsibility, should be firmly resisted. If the Romans consider themselves "sons of Romulus," their heads of state "new Romuli," and the Julian family "sons of Aeneas," these implications cannot be simply set aside in one particular context (which is, after all, the context of a poem about origins) just because the histories of literature tell us that its author is a frivolous love poet.

"The identification of Augustus with Romulus even to the point of his apotheosis demanded a 'positive' picture of Romulus":⁴⁶ if this motive is considered valid in the case of Virgil, we cannot exclude it from the perspective of a reader of Ovid. One who wishes to follow this line can negotiate with the text in such a way as to obtain a picture that is on the whole positive. Here is Romulus before his ascent to the skies (2.492, 497–98):

forte tuis illic, Romule, iura dabas.

Luctus erat, falsaeque patres in crimine caedis,
haesissetque animis forsitan illa fides. . .

. . . where Romulus happened to be giving verdicts. . . Amid the grief, allegations arose of a patrician conspiracy. That suspicion might have stuck in people's minds. . .

Iura dabas excludes the unacceptable version which sees Romulus, toward the end of his life, as a despot who imposed a cruel and arbitrary form of justice on his subjects (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.56.3); *falsae . . . caedis* is a sufficiently clear statement of the falsehood (not to mention the ideological tactlessness), of the persisting version according to which Romulus did not vanish into the skies but was made to vanish, torn to pieces by the senators who could not put up with him any longer.⁴⁷ As for his aspect as a master of simulation and dissimulation, this is a many-faceted question. When Aeneas, for example, keeps all his feelings to himself and dissimulates, Virgil proposes him as a model of self-control and the art of leadership, a model that is generally accepted as positive. And Romulus is shown in the same way by Livy, in an altogether positive context (1.9.6, *aegritudinem animi dissimulans*). But can these virtues develop into a disease in the holders of power? If feelings can be repressed, they can also be simulated, and there are grounds for suspicion that the two abilities go hand in hand. When Romulus's colleague in power, Titus Tatius, is eliminated in an obscure conspiracy, Livy cautiously admits that the king received the news *minus aegre quam dignum erat* (1.14.3). A less benevolent eye will discover strong traces of hypocrisy and duplicity throughout the prince's family album: Tacitus's portrait of Livia (5.1: *cum artibus mariti, simulatione filii bene composita*) includes a description both of Augustus's insidious diplomacy and of Ti-

46. Binder 1971, 163 n. 68, focuses on this argument as a starting point for his interpretation of the Roman archaeology in the *Aeneid*.

47. But on the death of Romulus see my part II, chapter 3.

berius's twisted and repressed nature. The language of panegyric in fact draws attention to the resemblances of character between the members of the ruling family—Augustus and Livia are “made for each other,” and Tiberius is “the mirror image of his father.” A share of these gifts held in common can now, thanks to Ovid, be seen to go back along the branches of the family tree to those ancestors that the emperor has determinedly selected and fashioned for himself.⁴⁸

The main problem is that however variously the story can be interpreted, it is still written from the point of view of the winning side. Ovid allows his readers to share the distancing awareness, so typically Alexandrian, that the narrative could also have gone differently, and should be weighed against the subjectivity of a given source and the distortions possibly imposed by the tradition. This effect is connected, as we shall see in the following chapter, with the use of internal narrators in the text, who may be personally involved as protagonists or else be biased witnesses. But Ovid also shows us that this pro-Romulan rewriting can be carried even further, and the myth of the origins ought to be perfected even more. Once one has begun, why not be pro-Romulan through and through? Livy's archaeology shows clearly that there are some obstinately shadowy zones in the story of Romulus.

Livy narrated the story of Rome's origins in Augustus's early years, and our studies tend to privilege this period—that of the *Aeneid*, of Horace's lyrics, of the temple of the Palatine Apollo—when we want to speak of Augustan ideology; but we must not forget that our usual division into periods also lumps together under one and the same label works that are distanced quite far in time, such as Ovid's *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*, for instance. The “early” and “late” Augustan ages have different concerns and interests. In the case of Romulus and Remus, for example, the myth's main interest lay initially in its potentialities for civil war: Virgil and Horace are both sensitive to the inscription of the theme “civil war” in this myth of the fratricide during the founding of the city. Rome would appear to be condemned to civil war in consequence of this original sin, the blood of a brother that was shed on her foundations:

48. The issue of *simulare/dissimulare* becomes very quickly a political one, and a source of obsessions, in the imperial society, and Ovid is strongly inscribed in the history of this idea. Cicero's last period is already an important source (Narducci 1989, index, s.v. “*Simulatio*”); a systematic study of the idea in Ovid, centered on the “mild” and cultivated version of flexibility and manners, is Labate 1984, 148 ff. Yet in a short while (Tac. *Ann.* 1.4.4, 2.57.3; but the tradition is much earlier, see e.g. Zecchini 1986) dissimulation is a well-established way of reading Tiberius's personality and his behavior in the transition from the early years to maturity.

Octavian-Augustus presents himself as the hierophant in a rite of expiation, his regime both as a necessary consequence of the fratricidal wars and as their necessary expiation. If this is the prevailing motive of interest in Romulus and Remus for the early Augustans, it is reasonable to expect the story to fall into shadow when the later developments of the regime make such a reference to civil war and its consequences less important (or even actually embarrassing). But this is not exactly what happens: it is rather the function of the reference that begins to change. In the years of transition between Augustus and Tiberius, among the values that it preaches imperial discourse privileges that of Concordia. This politicized divinity, to whom Tiberius dedicates an impressive Capitoline temple in 10 C.E.,⁴⁹ has the delicate task of ensuring harmonious internal relationships within the *domus Augusta*: between Augustus and his adoptive successors, between one another of these, between Augustus and Livia, between Tiberius and the continuance of the regime. We become witnesses to a search for myths and images of concord that focuses on such figures as Castor and Pollux, who represent concordant twinship and the harmonious division of power. It is in this kind of context that our late Augustan Romulus—who weeps and quotes Catullus at his twin's funeral, while Remus's ghost both accuses and exonerates him—was able to find attentive readers, capable of interpreting Ovid's shades of meaning and innovations.

Let us next look at the question of the auspices. This is a crucial issue both for Romulus, whose legitimacy as monarch is founded on them, and for Augustus, who uses this model in setting up the *augurium augustum*, the institution which is in his hands and is intimately connected with his very name. We know that the newborn city was committed to Romulus through the flight of birds, but the details of the match of the auspices between Romulus and Remus—the myth that holds together the power of the augurs and power over Rome—are somewhat disputable (4.817): *Sex Remus, hic volucres bis sex videt ordine. . .*

Romulus beats Remus by twelve to six: but who saw the birds first? The tradition generally indicated that it was Remus,⁵⁰ and this can raise a few queries: what were the exact terms of the agreement behind this competition which was to determine the future of Rome? Ovid does not

49. Kellum 1990 is a rich analysis of the figurative program.

50. For the sake of brevity and simplicity, I omit some problems caused by Enn. *Ann.* XLVI Sk., in any case a peculiar version of the quarrel; at line 90 the best solution is probably reading *priora* (Jocelyn 1971, 44 ff.; Timpanaro, 1988, 313), while Skutsch favors Lucian Müller's *propritim*.

make it clear (817–18, *pacto / statur*), but *ordine*, “in succession,” is ambiguous: twelve birds in succession one to another, or perhaps in succession to the ones that Remus had already seen? The impression is that Ovid is sweeping something under the carpet. And then, in *Fasti* 5.151–52—*huic Remus institerat frustra, quo tempore fratri / prima Palatinae signa dedistis aves*—the difficulty comes up again and is glossed in a different way. The normal meaning of the word has to be stretched somewhat if one is to read *prima* as an indication of Romulus’s superiority: the signs are thus “first-class, of absolute primacy.” The most obvious meaning, “first” in chronological order, is also the one that contradicts the tradition; Romulus certainly did better and saw more birds, but everyone knows that his birds appeared second in order of time (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.86–87), and the agreement was that the *first* to see them would be the winner (*Or. gent. Rom.* 23.1). By being overly careful to smooth over the difficulties raised by the tradition, the poet does not erase the rewritten points in the story but underlines them.

There have been vain attempts to exorcise the problem (“Ovid would never have compared Augustus with a brigand chief or a militarist”),⁵¹ but it is clearly and elegantly summed up by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill: the serious charge is not that Ovid is not serious about Augustus; the problem is that he is not being serious about Romulus and the origins of Rome. That is the discourse in which Augustus is being embodied: if the same discourse appears to be fundamentally frivolous, the prince will not profit much from the company he is keeping.⁵²

My only reservation is that I would not like this opposition between “frivolous” and “serious” to bring us back into the trap of an old-fashioned critical opinion, which indexes the *Fasti* on the base of an implicit hierarchy—light versus weighty, minimal versus Augustan—that is not a neutral one, based on timeless common sense, but has been dictated by an authoritative voice that still makes itself heard today. Those of us who are familiar with Ovid’s poetry will expect to find a certain irony in his treatment of Romulus, with his aura of archaic exemplarity and Ennian echoes: the “frivolity” typical of Ovid lies in his way of contesting the integration between past and present by emphasizing the invidious contrast (and choice) between *cultus* and backwardness, between mellow urbanity and country bumpkinism. Thus we are not unprepared for the vision of Romulus as backward and militaristic, rough and uncivilized: a man who reasons with his spear, who in order to make

51. So Bömer 1957–58, 1:28. 52. Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1987, 228.

love organizes gang rapes, who cultivates a single-minded devotion to Mars. After all, he was suckled on wolf's milk, a problem that the Romans cannot overlook in their national pedigree. We are not at all surprised to learn that in one of his rare moments of cultural interest, the founder invented a calendar year with Mars at the head of it⁵³—a year, alas, that just did not work (Ovid notes), as it had only ten months and no rational relationship with the seasonal cycle. Seen in these terms, the figure of Romulus falls into the usual category of Ovidian "lightness": his uncivilized archaism is laughed at, and the laughter is modulated into a modern-style frivolity of tone.

The reverse side of this picture is far less predictable. Romulus's archaism and lack of civilization show that he is inadequate as a model for today's prince (an explicit comparison and contrast is made in 2.119 ff.). But such qualities as his diplomacy, his ostentatiously displayed *pietas*, his repressed anger, and the maneuvers leading up to Remus's death do not fit in well with the above characterization. Seen from this angle, Romulus is almost too modern: he is the model of an up-to-date prince and is far too like what somebody—if that somebody could speak freely—might say about Augustus. The emperor's decision to annex Romulus to himself has set off a form of contagion, of reciprocal interchange between past and present.

It is important to note that this process of annexation and reconstruction of the past is not only limited to the implicit level. Naturally, the *Fasti* can only hint at the fact that the work of antiquarian reconstruction being carried out on Rome's origins is not a neutral operation but is a part in the overall "story" told by Augustan discourse. Ovid does however show us a mirror image of this process, once again in the figure of Romulus. This first builder of Rome has even extended his efforts to the highly specialized field of measuring astronomical time in relation to the city's calendar: a field which owes its most recent and most accurate contributions to two other members of the Julian family, Caesar and, above all, Caesar Augustus, who has completed and corrected Caesar's reform of the calendar. But according to Ovid's *Fasti*, Romulus's activity in this field even reached the point of giving names to the months, and like Augustus, he claimed two months for himself. One he called (like Augustus again) after his father. The other, the succeeding month, he decided to call April so that it would be sacred to his ancestress Venus—and at the

53. On the whole issue see Stok 1989, who highlights the implications of the chronological discussion for the Ovidian image of Romulus.

time, Ovid does not explain the intermediate steps on which this reasoning is based. In this sense, thanks to Romulus, April is also a month belonging to Augustus and his successors (4.21–22): *hic ad te magna descendit imagine mensis / et fit adoptiva nobilitate tuus* (“Your heritage bequeaths this month to you: it becomes yours through your adopted father’s noble rank”).

It would be a breach of tact (and an excess of literalism) to maintain that the prince grafts himself by “adoptive nobility” into a certain family tree: it is rather the case that the month itself acquires nobility from being associated with Augustus. All the characters involved in this antiquarian compliment, which makes April “their” month, have been in some way adopted by one person and have adopted another (this is true of Augustus, Tiberius, and Germanicus), and in a specular fashion, they have “adopted” for themselves a genealogy that includes Venus, and with her April, and Romulus. . . . But all this—and here is the newest emphasis as Ovid gives it—is due to Romulus’s careful research, *cum longum scriberet annum* (*longum* is rather unkind, seeing that the ingenuous king had tried to make a year out of only ten months, as is explained elsewhere).⁵⁴ However ignorant he may have been in the subjects of chronography and astronomy, Romulus was evidently at the top of the class in antiquarian studies and Greek mythology (4.27–32):

sic Venerem gradibus multis in gente repertam
alterius voluit mensis habere locum:
principiumque sui generis revolutaque quaerens
saecula, cognatos venit adusque deos.
Dardanon Electra nesciret Atlantide natum
scilicet, Electram concubuisse Iovi?

So he wanted Venus, who was more distantly related, to take her place in the second month. Unrolling the centuries to trace his family’s beginnings, he went all the way back to divine kin. How could he fail to know that Dardanus was the son of Atlas’s daughter Electra, and that Electra had bedded Jupiter?

Scilicet vaccinates us against any form of credulity. The simple shepherd king of the Palatine, *scilicet*, was well informed: he had read up on his subject thoroughly, by means of patient research, and *revoluta* (4.29) gives the idea of perusing a continuous book of past time. Basically, however, Romulus’s culture could be brought down to two universally well-known texts. For the genealogy going from Jove to Aeneas, he need only

54. *Fasti* 1.27 ff.

have read the *Iliad* (in l. 23 Ovid calls him *Iliades*, for he is connected backward with Troy through his mother Ilia). In a similarly natural tone—and in a way that is similarly open to suspicion—Aeneas takes it for granted that Achilles should know the whole of his genealogy: “We know each other’s descent, we know each other’s parentage, from listening to stories that are famous among mortal men . . . but if you want to know this too, so as to know my family well, many men know it . . .” (*Il.* 20.203 ff.). Aeneas starts off on his family tree, which begins, like *Fasti* 4.31, with the name of Dardanus (20.204).⁵⁵ In fact, no other Homeric character was so obsessive about his genealogy. For the entire stretch that continues from Aeneas (and the *Iliad*) down to Romulus, all that was needed was a glance through the celebrated sixth book of the *Aeneid*, which makes public the results of an intense antiquarian debate on the chronology of the Alban kings.⁵⁶ Without any great effort, in short, Romulus could trace a clear line running Jove–Dardanus–Erichthonius–Tros–Assaracus–Capys–Anchises–(Venus–) Aeneas–Iulus–Postumus–Latinus–Epytus–Capys–Calpetus–Tiberinus–Agrippa–Remulus–Aventinus–Procas–Numitor–Ilia–(Mars–) . . . (here I am summarizing *Fasti* 4.31–56). The king gives this genealogical operation a strong backing, that of his own power, and imprints its main points in the city’s calendar (4.57–60):

Ille suos semper Venerem Martemque parentis
dixit, et emeruit vocis habere fidem:⁵⁷
neve secuturi possent nescire nepotes
tempora dis generis continuata dedit.

Romulus always said that Venus and Mars were his ancestors, and he deserved to have his word believed: in order that his later descendants could not fail to know this, he gave successive months to the gods in his family.

The creation of the months acts as a confirmation of the Alban genealogy publicized by Romulus—and published by Augustus through the

55. Alternatively Romulus, potentially a fan of Ennius’s *Annales*, could be familiar with the credentials presented by the Ennian Aeneas to the king of Alba Longa, fr. XXIV Sk.: *Assaraco natus Capys optimus isque pium ex se / Anchisen generat*; Ovid reacts to this at 4.35 by emphasizing, rather than Anchises’ *pietas*, his close liaison with Venus.

56. The Alban genealogy is a puzzle for ancient and modern scholars (see Brugnoli 1983; Bandiera 1986); they do not share the scholarly control of the subject displayed by the Ovidian Romulus.

57. Again at 3.74–75, *credor et, ut credar, pignora multa dabo*, the emphasis centers on Romulus as the one who will prove to be the son of Mars—through his military skill, or through heraldic and calendrical manipulations. In a parallel passage, *Met.* 2.38, Phaethon insists, with sound common sense, that a divine father, not a rumored son, is expected to show evidence of a controversial paternity.

annals of the *pontifices*).⁵⁸ Only one connecting link remains to be made clear, and to tell the truth it is not an easy point. In what sense does the month of April owe its name to the goddess Venus (who, among other things, has no festival in this month)? Here too the link is based on an erudite (and fragile) conjecture: it is enough to know that the Greek name Aphrodite comes from the word for "foam," *ἀφρός*, which can then be brought in as the etymological ancestor of *aprilis* (cf. 4.61–62).⁵⁹ Thus the circle is complete: *if* Romulus had been able to read Greek, and *if* he had had sufficient information on the twenty-one generations that preceded him, he could have managed that prophetic return to the origins himself, thus saving the most recent *gradus* of the Julian family a great deal of trouble.

LOOKING FOR A GOOD KING

This split personality, divided between an archaic model and a modern flexibility, is an invitation to contest the use of Romulus as a central feature of Augustan discourse. While his archaic side expresses values that are by now unserviceable (crude militarism and a cultural vacuum), the messages that emerge from his modern side are far from reassuring: simulation, repressed violence, and the autocratic exploitation of science and religion. As an archaic model Romulus is incompatible with the present, as a projection of the present he acts as an alarming mirror.

But there is also a degree of elasticity in Augustan discourse, which is not reduced to preaching such hard and fast paradigms. Even if the representation of Rome's origins may give rise to contrasts that cannot easily be reconciled, we must also remember that Augustus has distinguished himself for his very ability to absorb contrasting factors and to make a synthesis out of the most conflicting aspects of the tradition. An important element in this strategy is illustrated by the parade of heroes in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*: a number of exemplary figures from the age of kings are passed in review, and there is a clear idea that the time of Rome's origins is also representative of her future. These figures do not appear to be intended to function each as an individual prefiguration of Augustus; what we see is rather a distribution, both dialectical and disharmonic, of the various virtues and capacities destined one day to come

58. On imperial interests for a new comprehensive edition, where the Alban genealogy had a systematic treatment in the fourth book, see e.g. Luce 1990, 135 with n. 31.

59. On the skepticism of Roman antiquarians see Rawson 1985, 248.

together in a perfect model for the prince. This at least is Norden's interpretation of Augustus's position in the narrative structure of the parade of heroes, placed as he is between Romulus and Numa.⁶⁰ Even if Augustus is above all an *alter Romulus*, Virgil's structural choice indicates that the peace-loving and priestly Numa also collaborates toward the definition of the modern *princeps*. Augustus certainly knew how to exploit, for the purposes of his own image, that division between competing values that is characteristic of the traditional discourse regarding the period of the kings of Rome.

But we have already seen that even this corrective technique is incapable of redeeming the Romulus of the *Fasti*. There is no longer any possibility, as Virgil had hoped, of reconciling the contrasts between the founder and Numa. Nor is it true, one must remember, that the sixth book of the *Aeneid* suggests a sort of equidistance between these two poles in the history of the kings, with the image of Augustus as the golden mean (and besides, the old Anchises is not a spokesman for the poet, and even less can he be identified with the author's own voice: Rome's imperial and military calling, as proclaimed by Anchises, certainly does not fulfill the requirements of Virgil's program). Even if one admits the significance of Augustus's location between the first two kings of Rome, one cannot but note that when the third king of the series, Tullus Hostilius, is to be introduced, Virgil's words (that is, once more, the words of Anchises, who is speaking to his son and preparing him for a hard soldierly mission) seem to show strong reservations about Numa and his tranquil reign (*Aen.* 6. 812–15):

cui deinde subibit
otia qui rumpet patriae, residuesque movebit
Tullus in arma viros et iam desueta triumphis
agmina. . . .

Then his successor will be Tullus, the one who will break the inactivity of our fatherland, and bring back the warriors to arms after a lazy interval, and the squadrons who had forgotten what a triumph is.

Evidently this period of peace has turned out to be an overlong pause, and although rich in good legislation and religion, it could have a weak-

60. Norden 1970, 326–27: "The emperor was by no means just a second Romulus; he was also a second Numa. This was the approach of contemporary readers, who could easily understand why Virgil places Augustus in the space between Romulus and Numa." Kennedy 1992, 42–46, appropriates this approach and makes a similar case for Ovid, but this assimilation of Ovid to Virgil seems excessive, as I argue below.

ening effect on the state. Tullus brings energy and warfare with him, together with the appropriate epic cliché *arma vir-*: in the world of Virgil's heroic poem, he is an "epic" king as opposed to an "alien" king. If it is true that Augustus is flanked by the pair Romulus-Numa, it is no less true that Numa, in the order of the kings, must measure himself against a pair of warlike antagonists.

But in Ovid there is no trace of Tullus, and we have by now seen enough of his version of Romulus, while in the case of Numa, he seems to have turned Virgil's words upside down (3.277 ff.):

principio nimium promptos ad bella Quirites
molliri placuit. . . .
exuitur feritas, armisque potentius aequum est
et cum cive pudet conseruisse manus.

Because the Romans at first were too ready for war, he decided to tame them with law. . . . They shed their savagery, right was stronger than might, the citizens were ashamed to have been fighting among themselves.

Cum cive implies that Romulus's reign—as everyone knows—was not innocent of the sin of civil war. *Nimium promptos* inverts Virgil's *resides* and *iam desueta*: the excess to be corrected was that of militarism, not of pacific inertia. *Feritas*, in Virgil, is only used to refer to an unsociable tyrant (*Aen.* 11.568) who was forced to live literally like a hunted beast. As the program of the *Fasti* declares (1.13, *Caesaris arma . . . Caesaris aras*) the poem sings of altars and not of arms—or rather, to be more precise, proclaims the superiority of altars over arms. It is true that the altars, no less than the arms, have been taken over as a field of operation and an instrument by the symbolic identity of the emperor. The monopoly of sacrifices and of sacrificial imagery is a strategic choice in the new discourse of power. Except that Numa, as seen by Ovid, is not yet ready to be integrated with Romulus.⁶¹

It is clear that this king—likeable, astute, peace-loving, a lover of doctrine and of poetry—represents an alternative to Romulus's martialism rather than a possibility of compromise with it. In the same way as Romulus, with his father Mars, is related to the epic representation of *arma* (as seen in our first chapter), so Numa opens the way to the elegiac code that is more suited to the program of the *Fasti*.⁶²

61. Another stimulating character in the *Fasti* is Evander (on whom see conveniently Fantham 1992b): an exile, peaceful king of a minimal Rome, a colonist without conquest. Evander complements the non-Romulan model of Numa: we might say that he is as opposed to Aeneas as Numa is to Romulus.

62. On Numa and literary self-consciousness in the poem, Hinds 1992, 118–21.

Ovid has consented, in accordance with the Romulan tendency of Augustan discourse, to forge the closest possible link between the founder and the prince, and by this very action he has placed Augustus in a potentially difficult situation. The monopoly of Romulus claimed by the new father of the nation could appear as an admission of unilaterality. One cannot (and the beginning of *Metamorphoses* 15 suggests that one must not) forget that Numa was "elected" king for the very reason that he possessed certain qualities that would correct and counteract the model set by Romulus. And the *Fasti*, written and circulated during the prolonged period of transition covering the final years of Augustus and the early years of his successor, suggests that a new and different atmosphere is to be anticipated.

A PRINCE WHO KNOWS THE STARS

If this exaggerated identification of Augustus with Romulus suggests that some kind of corrective is needed, Tiberius is hardly the ideal candidate. The heir apparent is only a vague presence in all the works of Ovid's exile, and this omission must always be kept in mind. The most effective obstacle to Ovid's return to Rome, even greater than the hostility of the aged founder of the dynasty, will be the fact that he cannot make any appeal to Tiberius. The revision of the *Fasti* that was carried out after Augustus's death made no significant changes in this direction, even though Ovid had had many lonely years in which to meditate on his relationship with a successor who had long been prepared for rule. The conclusion (or halfway mark) of the poem at the end of June is characterized by a sensational omission, that of the date of Tiberius's adoption and designation as Augustus's successor. The revised version, on the contrary, as is known, gives a scandalously obvious amount of space to the prospects of a different candidate.⁶³

For Ovid, Germanicus is the only hope that the imperial genealogy can offer. Certain attitudes of his, highlighted in the new proem of *Fasti* 1, give a picture of a figure that is closer to Numa than to Romulus. The young prince shows an interest in Aratus's poetry, which has much in

63. On the eclipse of Tiberius see also below, pp. 264 ff. Allusions to Germanicus and their incorporation to the poem are subtly analyzed by Fantham 1985; she is less convincing when she views (266 ff.) the revision of the text in the exile years as an attempt to attune Ovidian poetry to the new ideological trend which inspires the principate of Tiberius. This hypothesis fails to account both for the prominence of Germanicus and for the silence about Tiberius in the transmitted text.

common with the inspiration of the *Fasti*.⁶⁴ Ovid has in fact interspersed his calendar with astronomical comments that are arranged in accordance with the taste of Aratus's imitators. The prince's competence in the field of astronomy gives room for hope in an intellectual reign, like that of Numa, who competently restructured the Roman year, rather than in a militaristic policy oriented toward the values of Romulus (the inventor of the ten-month year). Nevertheless, Germanicus's fame as a victorious general and the celebration of his consulship in 17 C.E., which Ovid treats in the proem to *Fasti* 1, are not to be underestimated.

Perhaps there is a deliberate margin of ambiguity in Ovid's words, and this appears to reflect the relationship between his poetry and the reigning power. The poet emphatically declares that the glory gained by astronomers is greater than any other kind of glory and is above the temptations not only of pleasure but also of *officia*, being indifferent to ambition, to greed for money, to the glory that wears the purple (1.301–4). The denigration of politics and power, which are placed on the same level as *Venus et vinum* as distractions from a higher calling, is carried to a point that is unusual for Roman culture. Momentarily at least, Germanicus is forced to divide himself into two: the comment on the vanity of the purple (303, *perfusaque gloria fuco*) is far from innocuous in a poem dedicated to a man who has launched himself on a career of consulships and martial triumphs, a poem that has just celebrated the solemn day on which the consuls enter into office and inaugurate the Roman year. On the other hand, the sublime position attributed to astronomers cannot fail to appeal to a prophet-prince who is already devoted to the celestial Muses. If Germanicus is pleased by the antiquarian and astronomical inspiration of the poem that is being offered to him, this means that he is already drawn toward the learned and pacific realm of Numa (1.307–10):

Sic petitur caelum: non ut ferat Ossa Olympus
 summaque Peliacus sidera tangat apex.
 Nos quoque sub ducibus caelum metabimur illis,
 ponemusque suos ad vaga signa dies.

That's how to aim for the sky, not piling Ossa on Olympus, and having Pelion's top touching the stars. I too will survey the heavens with them to guide me, and assign the right dates to the wandering constellations.

64. Fantham 1985, 245 ff., points out that it is possible that Germanicus's *Phaenomena*, perhaps in a draft or anticipation, were available to Ovid, who had himself previously composed Aratean poetry.

The astronomical theme is identified with the rejection of those war-like themes in which military ambitions and epic programs go hand in hand. It is as if the debate between literary genres has become an integral part of the question of what kind of life to choose: epic, war, and "active life" form a single entity. *Ducibus* and *signa* are sharp words, used in counterpoint: to follow other "leaders" would bring us not to peaceful "constellations" but to "military standards." Ovid is inverting the language that Propertius used in agreeing (provisionally and hypothetically) to sing of epic deeds: *te duce vel Iovis arma canam* (3.9.47). Titanomachy and gigantomachy are rejected as emblematic of the "lofty" poetry associated with war and an Augustan commission, as in Propertius's celebrated model (2.1.19–20): *Non ego Titanas canerem, non Ossan Olympo / impositam, ut caeli Pelion esset iter. . .*

There is however an important novelty: the elegiac genre that is contrasted with the rejected genre is no longer love poetry, but poetry describing the year and its celestial background. This makes the antithesis even more clear-cut between the Titans' "scaling of the heavens" and the choice of a type of poetry that is in counteropposition to it, and an implicit reference is made to the only socially acceptable way of climbing from earth to heaven—that of being a prince, as were Caesar and Augustus. Even more importantly, *sic petitur caelum* is a reelaboration of certain powerful words in Virgil's epic, which, we remember to our surprise, come from a passage in praise of military ambition (*Aen.* 9.641–42):⁶⁵ "*macte nova virtute, puer, sic itur ad astra, / dis genite et geniture deos!*"

The speaker, in this case, is the god Apollo, and Germanicus's affinity with this god has already been declared in the proem to the *Fasti* (1.19 ff.). Ascanius has just killed his first enemy: Apollo congratulates him, and after warning him against taking untimely risks in battle, recommends such deeds of prowess to him as a path toward the skies. *Dis genitus* like Ascanius, the new prince among Aeneas's descendants is given a different recommendation: he will be able to ascend to the skies by a much less epic and bloody road. The poem to accompany him in the right direction is already there in front of him: the sublime upward movement that belongs to astronomical poetry has the effect of belittling, by comparison, the ambitions of Rome's great men. If the young

65. I am grateful to Michael Reeve for showing me the interest of this parallel. On the theme of attacking the heaven and its various implications see the dense rehearsal by Tandoi 1992, 530–33.

prince has a good ear for poetical allusions he may perceive an alarming hint in the image of the war of the Titans. The scaling of the heavens by means of piled-up mountains, Olympus, Ossa, and Pelion, goes back to the early patrimony of heroic epic, and the text that all Roman imitators have in mind is a passage from the *Odyssey* (11.315–16). The attack is made by two tall and handsome young men, who threaten the lords of heaven but will be “short-lived” (11.307) and will not go beyond the threshold of youth (11.317). Zeus’s son Apollo will kill them “before they begin to grow a beard” (11.319–20), in defense of his father’s throne and power. If Germanicus is particularly devoted to Apollo, he can reflect on the double nature of his patron god, bearer of the lyre and of the bow, musician and deadly guardian of the skies. If he chooses the dangerous side of Apollo, the new prince will meet all the risks, on the road to military glory, that his genealogy holds in store for him.

Guarantors and Self-Destroying Information

Penelopen tardas textit distexere telas

Sidonius 15.161

At the beginning of his first hymn, where he discusses the birth of the highest of the gods, Callimachus is assailed by a serious doubt, and in fact he is presented with a difficult problem. Zeus's birthplace is debated: some say he was born on Cretan Ida, some say in Arcadia. The poet resorts to the surprising move (though there will be important parallels in other works of his) of questioning the god directly, and asking which of these two parties is telling a lie. Zeus's answer (if it is really he who speaks) is lapidary (*Hymn.* 18)—*Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύσται* ("Cretans are always liars")—but it allows a whole range of ramifying deductions to be made.

QUESTIONING THE GODS

It is no new thing in the hymnal tradition that variants should exist, and a well-tryed method of dealing with them (*hymn. Hom.* 1.1–6) is first to list the versions to be discarded, dismissing them as lies (1.6, *ψευδόμενοι*), and then to follow the chosen path. This is only partly what happens in Callimachus, for here we find new consequences which derive mainly from his unprecedented action of directly questioning the celebrated god.

1. "Cretans are always liars" is not so much a proverb as a literary quotation from an antique poet, Epimenides (fifth–sixth century): does

Zeus therefore draw his knowledge (including that of his own birth) from the literary models of the past, just as a learned poet would, and just as Callimachus does?

2. "Cretans are always liars" enables Callimachus to orient his hymn toward the Arcadian version of Zeus's birth, to the disadvantage of the Cretan version: but any reader who recognizes the quotation also knows that Epimenides himself was a Cretan, and therefore the sentence falls within the classic category of those affirmations whose truth value cannot be determined (if it's true, it's false, and if it's false, it's true).

3. "Cretans are always liars," but, if Zeus really was born in Crete as the mythological tradition solidly affirms, he too would be included in the same paradox and we can never know whether he is telling the truth or not. Even Callimachus's own reaction, in using Zeus's authoritative answer to favor the alternative version, appears to be open to doubt, for there are also other factors that make Cretans even less credible: they are notorious for pointing out a scandalously unlikely "tomb of Zeus,"¹ and they maintain that it was Zeus who started their long tradition of pederasty.

We can conclude that the poet ostensibly binds himself to a past authority—yet this authority, for all its imposing success and traditional power, is simultaneously revealed to be open to doubt and interpretation.² These two actions, that of quoting and that of questioning the gods, are the sources of this contradiction.

In the new tradition that Callimachus inaugurates, right from the very first words of his first hymn, the practice of turning to antique traditions for information therefore ends up by producing effects of irony and ambiguity, and not any firm or authoritative guarantee. The poet makes his search for information central to his literary strategy, and the result of this research is to put into question the reliability of the findings that it obtains. In this new tendency, a typical move is to introduce an outside witness, an authoritative guarantor, and to draw attention to the means that the poet uses to get "the truth" out of him.

1. Callimachus quotes this notorious scandal as the ultimate fiction, and one could point out that in the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* (l. 100) Homer is asked to sing about something that is not present nor future nor past, and he answers by choosing Zeus's tomb as a subject, the most impossible fiction of all time.

2. Cf. Bing 1988, 77 n. 42; but I have profited also from other recent responses to this tantalizing text: Hopkinson 1984, 140; Goldhill 1976, 217–18.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIDACTIC POET

Modern scholars tend to separate Callimachus completely from his predecessors and to classify him as a “playful” poet. However, his relationship with the tradition, as expressed in the *Hymn to Zeus*, is not simply one of playfulness, and past models are interrogated on important questions. Callimachus concludes his hymn with a political celebration, and Ptolemy, the king of Alexandria, becomes the co-protagonist of the hymn with Zeus. Callimachus justifies this connection between the god and the sovereign by quoting (after Epimenides) another hemistich of archaic poetry: ἐκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες, “kings come from Zeus.” This is a sentence out of Hesiod’s *Theogony* (96), and it is taken from a context in which the poet compares and contrasts the powers of kings and those of the poetic word. The relationship between poetry and patron is no frivolous issue for Callimachus, but the problem is solved, rather like that of Zeus’s birth, through an appeal to the authority of literature. The fact that the sentence “kings come from Zeus” is a quotation has consequences that cannot be ignored: by quoting Hesiod, Callimachus is also alluding to the sentence’s original context (“ . . . and poets come from the Muses and Apollo”), and the act of quoting produces an additional meaning, “kings come from Zeus *because Hesiod said so*” (Hesiod was in fact claiming a new dignity and social function—in short, new authority—for poets).

On the other hand, the idea that poets can also tell lies is not extraneous to the *Hymn*, and neither can this be easily dismissed as “playfulness”: the theme of doubt, too, is connected with the poet’s memory of literature’s authority in the past. Callimachus observes that the poets of the past (60: the context implies Homer and Pindar at least) did not always tell the truth, and a little later he gives voice to a dangerous wish: “May I lie,” or “If I should happen to lie, may I do so . . .” in such a way as to persuade whoever is listening to me (cf. 65). Callimachus involves his audience in a discussion on the powers and the authority of poetry, and this denial of truthfulness spares neither Homer nor Hesiod.

We tend to think that Hesiod’s name can be cited as representative of a different tradition, a line of “sincere” poets who show their desire for a “truthful” type of poetry. “May I tell Perses the truth” was his initial program in his *Works and Days* (10). Seen in this light, Callimachus’s predilection for Hesiod appears rather odd. His own most ambitious work, the *Aetia*, opens with a quotation from the poem to Hesiod’s

Theogony: just as Hesiod had been instructed by the Muses of Helicon (as in fact we are told in the proem to the *Theogony*, 1–115), so Callimachus learned his stories in conversing with the Muses.

But in how many ways can Hesiod be read? The sentence “Cretans are always liars” comes from a line of Epimenides that sounds as if it could have been uttered by one of the Muses (“Cretans are always liars, beasts, idle guzzlers”) because, even if for no other reason, it is modeled on the Muses’ apostrophe in the *Theogony* proem (l. 26); “uncouth shepherds, a disgrace, all stomach and nothing else.” Epimenides may have been supplied with his own truth by the Muses, and so produced an echo of the scene in which Hesiod is inspired by the daughters of Zeus and of Memory. Hesiod’s poem about the gods, the *Theogony*, originates from his encounter with divine informants, for it is the Muses who give him knowledge about the past and the future, and encourage him to sing of the lineage of the eternal gods.

It is not so easy to understand why, after thus brutally apostrophizing the shepherds in line 26, the Muses should solemnly declare that they know “many lies similar to true things” and that they are also able, when they want to, to say true things (27–28). This is the first declaration they make in the poem, and the only one that Hesiod reports directly, and it therefore seems legitimate to give it a certain weight. If the Muses can also tell lies that are indistinguishable from the truth, what guarantee is there that the *Theogony*, inspired by the Muses, is a revelation of truth? Most modern critics refuse to put the question in such “take it or leave it” terms: our guarantee lies in all the rest of what we know about Hesiod, who is a didactic poet because he is a master of truth.³ But this could well be seen as a circular argument, for after all, “all the rest” (or at least all the rest of the *Theogony*) depends on this very initiation scene: if, as the Muses seem to be affirming, their own words can be either true or “false but like the truth,” all we can do is accept the fact that we have no way of distinguishing one from the other. Many readers of this scene presuppose that, even if they wanted to, the Muses would not be capable of telling lies about the gods: one of the first things that we learn about them is that they are the daughters of Zeus and of Memory (53–54). The Muses are goddesses (as Theocritus observes in *Id.* 16.3) and it is as goddesses that they sing of the gods. Hesiod’s poem about the gods can thus

3. “To dismiss this would mean to ignore the very core of Hesiodic poetry, didactic intention”; Arrighetti 1992, 46. Cf. also Arrighetti 1975, 6: the Muses appoint the poet to an absolutely clear function, “to sing what is true. . . . Possession of truth and profession of truth are now the main feature of his existence as a poet.”

only contain true information, to be contrasted with the “lies like truths” that are on the contrary typical of Homer (after all, “we know how to tell many lies that are like the truth” is, almost word for word, a line from Homer describing Ulysses’ skill in the art of convincing fiction—*Od.* 19.203).

But, to come back to our question, in how many ways can Hesiod be read? His readers in ancient times do not all seem to have been as attached as we are to the image of him as “poet of truth” in opposition to Homer’s fascinating but unprofitable lies. The poets who make the greatest use of allusions to Hesiod—that is, Callimachus and Ovid in his *Ars amatoria* and *Fasti*—cannot be easily fitted into this sort of traditional picture. The problem, as we have already seen in the case of the *Hymn to Zeus*, may well lie in this very use of divine informants. The idea that these figures lend the poem an extra guarantee, an anchorage in revealed truth, must be treated with the greatest caution. The poet who presents himself as a learner establishes a clear parallel between himself and his reader, in that narrator and reader are faced with the same problems of belief in respect to the information that is being offered. The reader can be induced to believe the poet insofar as the poet has been right in believing a higher authority—the Muses, or whatever other deities may speak to him. But Hesiod’s Muses begin by making it quite clear that their capacities are not limited to what is true. The question that many of Hesiod’s readers tend to ask themselves—“am I to believe this man who says he is a Boeotian shepherd and is able to sing of the origin of the gods?”—is raised a step higher. Once again, the notion that the Muses are incapable of lying on such a subject turns up as a guarantee. After all, aren’t they firsthand witnesses? Well, yes and no: they are the daughters of Zeus and Memory, which means that much of the *Theogony* concerns events that took place *before* they were even born.⁴ In this sense, the Muses are not so very different from human poets. Their knowledge depends on the reconstruction of the past and on acts of memory. And their point of view cannot be neutral (they are Zeus’s daughters, and much of the *Theogony* is given over to explaining the origins and the legitimization of Zeus’s power).

I am not pushing the claim that this is actually the “true” reading of the proem to the *Theogony*, nor do I believe that Hesiod’s text should involve us in radical doubts about the relationship between words and

4. This intriguing point was made by Strohm 1976; there is a harsh response by Neitzel 1980.

truth.⁵ I only want to maintain that if it is possible to regard Hesiod as the originator of didactic poetry with the program of telling the truth, it is also possible to read him in a different way, and this reading would have been perfectly accessible to poets like Callimachus and Ovid. The use of divine informants in the *Theogony* proem can be read as a “type” of the relationship between the authority of the poet and the attitude of his destined readers. The underlying message might be not so much “I must believe Hesiod because I believe the Muses” as “I must believe Hesiod because I have no word except his,” or rather, “I will believe Hesiod if he is good enough at convincing me.” If Cretans are always liars, it is not automatically true that all Boeotians tell the truth. The real problem, at this point, is the difficulty that any literary text has in constructing an *hors-texte* for itself, a space outside itself: the meeting with the Muses is a narrative frame for the *Theogony*, but it is also part of Hesiod’s narrative, and is thus subject to the same limits and regulated by the same pact between narrating voice and audience.

In this chapter I want to examine the consequences that this tradition has on the poetics of the *Fasti*. The use of divine informants is one of our starting points, and we shall try to keep in mind the problems that Callimachus and Hesiod have made visible to us, concerned with the relationship between the authority of the poet, the credibility of the narrative, and the authority of the gods. Another starting point that we have arrived at is the concept that the presence of informants within a didactic text brings about a concentration of its literary self-consciousness. The three-cornered relationship between the poet, the tradition, and his audience tends to reproduce itself with typical distortions: the poet reveals himself as learner and thus anticipates the position of his readers; the gods, in their role as informants, occupy the space that belongs to the literary tradition. The figure of the poet tends to dwindle, only to reappear later, in greater force, as the only real guarantor of what the didactic text is trying to tell us. At this point—but only after this self-reflexive process—the reading of the text comes very near to a bare choice of “take it or leave it.”

METAMORPHOSIS OF AN INFORMANT

One of the first Roman versions of this theme (which could be defined as “the paradox of the informant”) is also one of the most elegant: it occurs

5. On this reading I share the constructive doubts expressed by Ferrari 1988.

in Propertius 4.2, in a cycle of Roman and aetiological elegies that are important for the poetics of the *Fasti*. The god Vertumnus is given the space of a whole poem to explain his own debated nature. His speech is intended to be in reply to the curiosity of an unspecified character (4.2.1, *quid mirare*. . . ?). Only in the last lines does it become clear that the speaking voice in this Propertian poem is that of a statue, which stands in a precise place in Rome (57–64). Speaking statues of deities who explain their own nature are a recurrent motive of wonder in Callimachus's aetiological poetry. Their listener's initial amazement (*quid mirare*. . . ?) is in fact a constant typical of Callimachus's *Aetia*, where the stories follow one another as replies to the narrator's specific and curious questions ("what is the reason for that strange statue?" "how did that strange rite start?" etc.).

In treating the etymology of his own name, Vertumnus takes the same line as an antiquarian or a learned post-Callimachean poet might have done: he lines up and weighs various possibilities, a derivation of *Vertumnus* either from *verso*. . . *ab amne* (10, from a change in the course of the Tiber) or from the annual "turning" of the seasons (11, *vertentis*. . . *anni*); but then, in the third place,⁶ the divine informant explains the etymology that he himself prefers: *Vertumnus* is connected, rather, with a distinctive capacity of this god, that of metamorphosis (47–48): *at mihi quod formas UNUS VERTEbar in OMNis / nomen ab eventu patria lingua dedit* ("but because I could conVERT my UNity into OMNiformity, my native tongue has named me VERTUMNUS from the result").

By a prodigious linguistic contraction this name, which is thus itself also the *eventus* of a metamorphosis, has been created through a transformation of the words *verto*, *unus*, and *omnis*: "one who changes himself into all," Vertumnus. As a preface to this apparently decisive revelation, the god makes a polemical appeal for belief (19–20): *mendax fama, nocet: alius mihi nominis index: / de se narranti tu modo crede deo!* ("lying rumor, you are a nuisance; there is another voucher for my name; just listen to the god who speaks about himself").

How can one fail to believe a god who performs the exegesis of his own self (as we have seen, Callimachus has paved the way)? But perhaps it is a bit too late to secure the reader's belief. In the central part of the song, before analyzing the etymology of his name, the god illustrates his

6. The pattern of listing alternative variants until the divine voice selects the "right" one is another Callimachean legacy: Miller 1982; Barchiesi 1991, 8.

skill in giving a perfect impersonation of any type of character: a girl, a toga-wearing Roman, a hay mower, a soldier, a harvester, a drunkard, a hunter, a Faun, a horseman, a fisherman, a salesman, a shepherd, a grower and seller of vegetables. The first example of his adaptability is unkind if this poem is addressed to Propertius himself: *indue me Cois, fiam non dura puella* (23). If he wears sexy dresses from Cos, Vertumnus will come to look dangerously like the Cynthia of whom the love poet sings. The suspicion could well arise that the god might also be capable of imitating an expert in Roman antiquities. In the preceding elegy, 4.1, the dominant theme was that of credibility: Propertius attempts to qualify himself as the poet of Rome, but a mysterious soothsayer tries to discourage him by boasting of his own trustworthiness (4.1.75, *certa . . . certis auctoribus*; 79, *di . . . testes*; 80, *fide*; 92, *meam firmant . . . fidem*; 98, *vera . . . fides*). The soothsayer's name, Horos, is also a Greek word for "year"; Vertumnus, the god of the year who constantly transforms himself, could have something in common with this insidious character. Propertius's aetiological project opens under debated auspices.

However, the common base of all these etymologies in *verto(r)* does give rise to a certain pessimism: perhaps transformation is too much of a second nature to the god for any single or stable explanation to be possible. His metamorphic skill has something of the poetic about it, and in line 57 Vertumnus is evidently aware that he is speaking in verse: *sex superant versus*. . . . After all, an etymology derived from *versus*, "poetic line," would be no worse than many others. The situation is not improved by the god's insistence on his Etruscan origins (4.2.1, *signa paterna*; 2, *Tusci ego Tusci orior*; 48, *nomen ab eventu patria lingua dedit*; 49, *meis . . . Tuscis*): all the Latin etymologies could be quite irrelevant, if applied to an origin which is both unquestionable and linguistically different.

On 9 June, as he returns from the rites of Vesta,⁷ Ovid meets a talkative old woman and questions her. The old woman begins to speak (*Fasti* 6.401): *Hoc, ubi nunc fora sunt, udae tenere paludes* ("this area where the Fora are today was occupied by sodden swamps"), in words that

7. A festival mentioned by Propertius in the protasis to his aetiological elegies, 4.1.21–22. In the context (4.1.19–26) we find references to several traditional celebrations: *Parilia*, *Vestalia*, *Compitalia*, and *Lupercalia*. Since the festivals are listed in their calendrical order, and the result is a Roman year in a nutshell (the dates are in April, June, December, February respectively), one might say that in this perspective also Propertius paves the way for the poetic program of the *Fasti*, and, conversely, allusions to 4.1 in the *Fasti* construct Propertius as a precursor of the new genre.

allude to the opening of Propertius's fourth book: *Hoc quodcumque vides, hospes, qua maxima Roma est, / ante Phrygem Aenean collis et herba herba fuit* ("all that you see now, stranger, where mighty Rome is, was occupied, before Aeneas from Phrygia, by hills and grass").

Amid other information, she manages to quote Vertumnus, and she does so on a precise cue, presenting him as *iste deus* (6.409): the topography confirms that we are in exactly the same place as the location of Propertius 4.2. The old woman is thus explaining the aetiology of his name in front of the very statue of the god that Propertius's readers have already heard speaking. Her first words, *conveniens diversis iste figuris*, seem to indicate clearly that the etymology claimed by Propertius's Vertumnus is still well known: *diVERSIS* is an explicit signal. But the following line gives an aetiological explanation, and it is the one that, as we have seen, Ovid's model rejected: "the god who is adaptable to metamorphoses (Vertumnus: *diVERSis*) had not yet taken his name from the deviation of the river (Vertumnus: *aVERSo ab AMNe*)."⁸ Evidently the "false reputation" that Propertius attacked has again prevailed.⁸ Ovid takes ceremonious leave of the good old woman of the Velabrum, and the god, who was so loquacious in Propertius, does not seem to have been allowed access to the *Fasti*. But with a god like Vertumnus one can never be sure. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* shows us a series of examples of his transformational ability, and in the most important one, the god takes on the form of a talkative old woman (14.654 ff.). There is no reason why, in short, the aged informant who speaks in the *Fasti* should not be the god in yet another of his disguises, and thus an indirect way of giving the lie to the Vertumnus impersonated in Propertius's elegy.

But the Callimachean poets' predilection for elderly informants who are rich in knowledge and in bizarre experiences can cut both ways. The figure of the old woman belongs to a typology of those who are not only loquacious but also not particularly credible: *aniles fabellae*, "old wives' tales," is a traditional expression for "only fairy tales."

MY NAME IS CHLORIS

Among the many dialogues with divinities that are contained in the *Fasti*, there is one that has some similar characteristics. In 5.191–92 the poet asks the goddess Flora to explain her own name herself: who can give a better guarantee of truth? *Ipsa doce, quae sis: hominum sententia fal-*

8. There are remarks in Porte 1985a, 222–23.

lax / optima tu proprii nominis auctor eris ("Teach me yourself who you are: human opinion is fallible; you'll be the best source for your own name"). The etymological context here promises much better than the one offered by Vertumnus, a god whose perfidy we have already explored. In the dialogue that follows, both Flora and the poet continue to repeat words like *flos* and *floreo* (there are at least eleven examples in about a hundred lines) and so many names of flowers and plants that they could fill up a treatise on gardening. In her autobiography, the goddess says that she has been officially appointed as the goddess of flowers (5.212: *arbitrium tu, dea, floris habe*). But all this redundancy is hardly necessary, because not even the most wildly speculative of Roman antiquarians seems ever to have had the slightest doubt about this etymology, which is a simple identification.⁹ We expect Flora to be more banal as an autoexegetist than Vertumnus, but there is a novelty in the first words of her reply to the narrator's question (5.195): *Chloris eram, quae Flora vocor*. . . .

As a Greek nymph, the goddess was *Chloris*, and her Roman name is only a clumsy transliteration. Through her flowers, and through events which we shall not relate here, the goddess has come to Rome and is now associated with florid popular festivals. Ovid asks Flora several questions, but with typical tact gives an answer to them himself (the "cause" is not difficult, he points out in 5.350), concerning an aspect that could be embarrassing for her to talk about—the fact that her festivals are enacted on the scene by prostitutes. There is no mystery here: the festival is a reminder to the populace of the sensual pleasures of "gathering rosebuds while ye may," of roses which unpicked at their prime leave only

9. As Ovid must have known, Flora's supervision is, however, generally effective on every kind of vegetation. Verrius Flaccus establishes this interpretation as unassailable, as can be seen from the *Fasti Praenestini* about 28 April: *eodem die aedis Florae quae rebus florescendis praeest dedicata est propter sterilitatem*. This sober comment would have prompted Ovid with an easy way out from the dilemmas caused by 28 April (see above, pp. 133 ff.). If he had accepted to introduce Flora as a purely "georgic" divinity—discarding her apparatus of mimes and lewd shows—the meeting of Flora and Vesta on the same day could have had a much less corrosive potential.

Flora's control over all kind of plants and over fertility suggests a second problem (here I am indebted to Fantham 1992a). Flora is the only agrarian divinity of some relevance to be absent in the proemium to Virgil's *Georgics*, 1.5–20, in contrast with Varr. *Rust.* 1.1.5–7, a source of Virgil, where Flora is named. Yet Ovid recuperates the goddess with some emphasis, both in her agrarian and in her theatrical competence. So Ovid's interest in Flora—given the general relevance of Virgil's didactic poem to the *Fasti*—can also be interpreted as a purposeful correction of the selection of Roman-Italic pantheon that had been consecrated by the authority of Virgil.

thorns, and so on. Even though she does not speak, the goddess does not appear to be perturbed by these associations, and the reader who remembers her older name may be amused when he thinks that *Chloris* was in fact appropriate, not because it refers to vegetation (being associated to the Greek word for “green”), but because, in Rome, it seems to have been a typical professional name for girls employed in the sex trade.¹⁰ The goddess’s information may be quite untrue—no one has ever imagined Flora to be a Greek name, and the goddess has no counterparts in Greece—but all the same it reveals something that is relevant to the account of her powers, and does so with a delicacy that is becoming to a goddess who lives in the lower ranks of society.

THE USEFULNESS OF TALKING TO THE GODS

The case of Flora is a small-scale example of how the authority of divine informants is an open question in the *Fasti*, in a state of constant negotiation with the reader and liable to produce unexpectedly mischievous innuendos. It is not very helpful to see this use of the gods as direct interlocutors in simple terms of narrative strategy. Critics who consider that the gods serve above all to lend variety to the narration never fail to add that they are also there as a guarantee of the work’s didactic content. But we have just seen that this guarantee is open to doubts. If these informants are unable to provide themselves with a higher level of authority, what is the end to which their presence is only a means?¹¹ Rather than conclude that the gods are simply an instrument in Ovid’s hands—which, after all, would not be consonant with their dignity—we should be better advised to give serious attention to the dialogic nature of these interventions. The narrator, in fact, presents these sessions of question and answer as an effective interaction, and not as a simple but artistically varied one-way supply of information. The gods are characters in the narrative, not didactic abstractions. The narrator’s process of inquiry

10. Note the contexts featuring the name at Hor. *Carm.* 2.5.18 and (with a mention of roses) 3.16.8; Prop. 4.7.72.

11. Bömer 1957–58, 1:49, first defines the gods as a “Mittel zum Zweck” subservient to the aetiological exposition, then excludes them from the area of a “sincere belief”; yet, if we discard the problem of belief, which is certainly more complex than Bömer allows, there is still the objection that aetiology, far from being an undisputed value, is the playground of ambiguity and illusion (as demonstrated by Porte 1985a). If the gods must be subordinated to a project, we should think of something else: the project is neither a didactic intention, which regulates knowledge and belief, nor a self-contained pastime.

into the various causes becomes no less a part of the effective content of the work than the causes themselves. His relationship with the gods contains action and comedy, and is in short a real dialogue.

The usual premise on which this delicate relationship is based is that the gods are generally called on, as they are (we have seen with what consequences) in Callimachus's first hymn, and as they must have been at times in the *Aetia* too, to give information about themselves, or about matters which directly concern them.¹² They are better informed, or carry more authority, not only because they are gods but also because they are eyewitnesses. And it is this element of personal interest, in fact, that colors the narrative with more or less implicit rhetorical strategies and with other types of bias. Let us first of all look at the question from the poet's point of view. If Ovid decides to question the gods, in the context of a poem inspired by Rome's state religion, he is aspiring to new qualifications that go beyond his usual status as a narrator. According to the religious tradition of Rome, access to the "visibility" of the gods is limited to professionals licensed by the institutions of the magistracy and the priesthood, and it is restricted to precise occasions of worship.¹³ In choosing to sing of the *Fasti*, therefore, Ovid too must become a professional. For permission to converse with the gods, both self-discipline and diplomacy are required. The narrator can learn from the experts in this field, priests and magistrates, as well as from religious poets and divinely inspired bards like Hesiod or Callimachus.

This preoccupation on Ovid's part cannot be said to be constant throughout the poem, but some critical points can be placed in evidence. We have seen that in the *Floralia* episode the poet asks the goddess about a little of everything: her etymology, her life history, the details of her ritual, and the story of her games; but when he has to inquire into the presence of the prostitutes he prefers to answer the questions himself. We have noted, too, that Bacchus is invoked in the tones of a hymn in the third book, where a state festival, the *Liberalia*, is to be explained (3.713 ff.; 789 ff.), but that there is no trace of any apostrophe to the god in the account of his various love affairs in 3.459–516.¹⁴ There is a different degree of "presence" of the god according to whether the text bears more resemblance to a hymn or, on the contrary, to a mythological

12. The main studies on divine interventions in the poem are Miller 1983 and (more relevant to my present angle) Santini 1974–75.

13. Scheid 1989; on some "professional" intonations in Ovid, see Barchiesi 1991, 4–7.

14. So Harries 1989, 181; his whole analysis is important.

elegy. Naturally this does not mean that the reader must exclude the possibility that deviant signals may also be present in the hymnic and aretalogical section that begins with line 713. The real difference is that everything, even the deviant signals, must here be filtered through the expressive code of the religious hymn. The poet's farewell to the god, for example, brings together two conventions that are very different from each other, the bull-like aspect of the god (*placata . . . cornua*) and the generic image of divine inspiration as a wind that fills the poet's sails (3.789–90): *Mite caput, pater, huc placataque cornua vertas / et des ingenio vela secunda meo!* ("Father, turn your head and peaceful horns over here and grant billowing sails to my talent").

Everyone knows that Bacchus can have the aspect of a bull, and that the progress of a poem can be identified with a sea voyage. But it may be a surprise to remember that the word *cornua* is also a nautical term, "sailyards," and thus combines with the successive image in a surrealistically precise way.

The most typical convention of the hymn to a god is the proclamation of his powers and qualities. Some assistance might be looked for from the god who has been invoked right from the start (3.714, *fave vati*), but his protection is of no help in teasing out the complicated aetiological relationship between Dionysus-Bacchus-Liber (*Liberalia*) and the occasion on which young men put on the *toga virilis* for the first time (3.771 ff.). The problem lies in the fact that hymn and aetiology belong to two quite different genres of poetic composition.¹⁵ The divine attributes listed in a hymn cover various aspects of the god's essence, and there is no need for them to be in logical agreement; but the search for a cause or for an etymology, on the contrary, makes it necessary to choose one path in preference to others. The poet provides a number of parallel explanations, as can happen when applying an exegetical discourse to Roman rituals, and the first two are symptomatically incompatible: the toga is put on on Bacchus's day because the god is young, and his image is that of eternal youth; but the toga is put on on Bacchus's day because Bacchus is *pater*, and fathers pray for their sons during this ceremony. . . . Bacchus as youth, Bacchus as *pater*: this plurality may be congenial to the composer of the hymn, but it has the effect of checkmating the aetiological poet. And all hopes that the god who has been invoked, and who is present in Ovid's text thanks to the strategy of the

15. Miller 1992, 27–28, is a fine discussion of the interplay between the different codes of hymn and aetiology.

hymn, may have a solution of his own to offer turn out to be vain. In short, the poet's contact with the god can be guaranteed by the official nature of the ceremonial invocation and by its panegyric structure, but this does not offer any solution to the problem of credibility: on the contrary, it complicates it further.

INQUIRY INTO THE GREAT MOTHER

The case of the Magna Mater is a special one, because the goddess is present at her own festival but delegates her reply to the voice of the Muse Erato (the Muse of love poetry, since April is Venus's month: 4.195–96).¹⁶ This filtering of information through a secondary informant introduces a mediatory element into the various narratives concerning the Great Mother, and this element shows itself to be particularly opportune. In fact the first story is about the birth of Zeus, a theme that, as we have seen in the case of Callimachus, can open up an interminable fugue of uncertainties. When speaking in the first person, Ovid on one occasion (*Met.* 2.406) indicates Arcadia as the god's birthplace; but one of his characters, Minos (a Cretan—and therefore a liar?), presumes that Zeus was born in Crete (*Met.* 8.99) and there is more than one allusion to this version in Ovid (e.g. *Am.* 3.10.20). Now, if it were Rhea herself speaking, we should be compelled to believe her: *mater semper certa*, the goddess, if no one else, must know where she gave birth to her exceptional offspring. On the contrary, we have an external narrator, Erato, who calls attention to the antiquity of the event, and insidiously indicates this same antiquity as the principal guarantee for the event itself (4.203–4): *Iuppiter ortus erat: pro magno teste*¹⁷ *vetustas / creditur: acceptam parce movere fidem* ("Jupiter had been born—trust tradition's testimony and don't disturb received opinion").

This invitation may be addressed to Callimachus, whose account of the myth in his *Hymn to Zeus* incorporated some unconventional initia-

16. On the names of the Muses and the notion of literary system in Ovid, see Barchiesi 1991.

17. *Pro magno teste* has the potential of an insidious allusion: Callimachus (above, p. 182) had summoned as a witness the most authoritative of all possible witnesses—with surprisingly little effect.

A word like *testis* (or like *εὐθύνομαι* in Greek: Feeney 1991, 44 n. 144) is typical of a discussion on how authentic poetic reference can be. Regarding the notion of "witness" in Roman debates on the value of literary testimonies, it is worth considering, as Alberto Cavarzere reminds me, that even as a juridical notion *testis* is a suspicious entity: in Roman trials, *testes* are surrounded by a remarkable aura of mistrust.

tives, and the idea that antique tradition should be a source of authority may raise a smile, because it was Callimachus himself who noted that antique poets have a tendency toward falsehood (*Hymn.* 1.60).

The rest of the story runs undisturbed along the lines of the most generally accepted tradition regarding Zeus's origins: he was born on Mount Ida in Crete. The difficulty lies in the fact that the Magna Mater, whose virtues are being celebrated, is connected with the Mount Ida in Troas: Ovid in line 182 spoke of *Idaeae festa parentis*, and the Muse is narrating the aetiology of the *Phrygian* sounds (214, *Phrygios . . . modos*) that accompany the ritual: in this light the mention of Mount Ida reechoing with the clash of arms at the birth of Zeus (207, *ardua . . . Ide*) is at the very least a *suggestio falsi* (perhaps the Great Mother too is a namesake? Are there two goddesses as there are two Mounts Idas?).

Other motives for using Erato as spokeswoman emerge clearly from the narratives that follow. The story of Attis (4.233 ff.) is an occasion for Ovid to measure himself against a famous Catullan model, and it would be almost impossible even to imagine a version of Catullus 63 as narrated by Cybele in person (something along the lines of "then I set a lion on him . . . what a satisfaction it was for me to see him castrate himself"—horrible!). This idea of hesitation and equivocation is again present in the account of the Great Mother's transfer from Pessinus to Rome.¹⁸ The Sibyl's announcement to the Romans is *Matrem iubeo, Romane, requiras* (4.259), and the solemn oracle (as the tradition requires of oracles) could hardly be more ambiguous. Readers of Virgil cannot help remembering his *antiquam exquirite matrem* (*Aen.* 3.96), but that message was the cause of a painful misunderstanding, for Anchises had interpreted it as a reference to Crete, from which both his family and this great Phrygian goddess originated, *mons Idaeus ubi* (*Aen.* 3.105). The correct solution to the riddle, as we know, was "Italy." Now the Romans find the same words used to urge them to travel in the opposite direction. Therefore, when Apollo glosses the Sibyl's message and explains to the Romans that this is the goddess that *in Idaeo est invenienda iugo* (4.264), the reader meditates once more on the occasions for confusion (Cretan Ida or Phrygian Ida) that accumulate in poetic geography and toponymy.

18. On Augustan appropriation of the cult of Cybele/Magna Mater—a process that involves control and toning down of the most glamorous "exotic" aspects of the ritual—I recommend Becher 1988, 157–69; on poetic recreations and responses, Wiseman 1984 (focusing on the *Aeneid*) and Littlewood 1981 (specifically on the *Fasti*).

More importantly, the whole story of the goddess's transfer appears to be constructed around a deviant center of interest. On her arrival in Rome, Cybele proves, irrefutably and unexpectedly, that a much-talked-about woman is chaste. We hear not the goddess's voice directly but Erato's summary, and we can pick up a series of signals of uncertainty, for Erato, Muse of erotic poetry, is piecing together the surviving fragments of a remote story. Claudia Quinta will finally prove her own chastity, but the narrator's stress is placed on the difficulty of believing her: *casta quidem, sed non et credita: rumor iniquus . . . falsi criminis acta rea est* (4.307–8: "She was chaste but no one believed it; unfair gossip had hurt her and she stood indicted on a false charge"). Could this state of indictment (or guilt) justify the solidarity of a goddess whose name is also R(h)ea? The question of whether to believe Claudia or her reputation continues to occupy the foreground: *famae mendacia risit; credula turba; casta negor; credita vix tandem teste pudica dea* (cf. 4.307–8, 311–12, 321, 344). We do not know why the goddess vindicated Claudia, but we are firmly told by the narrating Muse that we must believe it, for it is a story that is also staged in the theater (4.326): *mira, sed et scaena testificata loquar*.

This reference to the theater is an elegant aetiological touch, considering that the Mater's festival, the *Megalensia*, is connected with the origins of the Roman theater; but to say "it is a stage tale" is a well-known way for a narrator to say "it is a tall story" or something of the kind.¹⁹ This passing on of responsibilities creates a parallel with the astonishing circumstances of the birth of Jove ("the antiquity of the story is a guarantee of its truth"). The beautiful Claudia has another guarantee, this time implicit, for her good behavior; she is in fact a descendant of *Clausus* (4.305), the blameless Sabine hero, as we learn from Virgil (*Aen.* 7.706–7)—as well as being, of course, an ancestress of Augustus's wife and of his successor. But the question of credibility that dominates the whole narrative reminds us that we are not listening to an impartial voice. Our evidence is provided by the voice of the Muse of love, and as the inspiring Muse of erotic poetry, Erato has a personal interest in the affair—that of defending a *puella* who is being persecuted on account

19. "Comparable to stage inventions" (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 9.22.3) is a strong disclaimer when uttered by a historian. Here we have the reverse of the coin, since Ovid is a poet and the focus is on, of all possible aetiologies, precisely the origins of the great theatrical games tied to the worship of Magna Mater. Roman theater discloses its origins and, simultaneously, casts a shadow of doubt and irony on a certain aspect of its founding myth: a worthy prelude to Roman comedy, as it were.

of her “elegiac” lifestyle. The Muse takes advantage of a suitable opportunity, for example, to set right the ideas of one of her favorite poets, Propertius.

Quid iuvat ornato procedere, vita, capillo? the love elegist par excellence had complained (1.2.1), taking the side of traditional moralism against Cynthia’s stylishness. Erato replies that it is only senile moralists who see fashionable hairstyles as a crime (4.309–10): *Cultus et ornatis varie prodisse capillis / obfuit, ad rigidos²⁰ promptaque lingua senes* (“Her elegance and the way she appeared in a variety of hairstyles prejudiced the inflexible old men, as did her quick retorts”).

Right in the middle of the Second Punic War, Claudia figures in Erato’s narrative (A.A. 2.16, *tu nomen amoris habes*) as the representative of an extremely up-to-date complexity²¹ and a nontraditional morality.

MOTHER COURAGE

When Ovid comes to the *Carmentalia*, he appreciates that it would be opportune to apply to the divinity after whom the festival is called: after all, Carmenta owes her name to a word that means “poetry,” and what more suitable informant could there be for a poetic treatment of her festival (1.467–68)? *Ipsa mone, quae nomen habes a carmine ductum / propositoque fave, ne tuus erret honor* (“Teach me yourself, you whose name derives from the charm of song. Support my project, so your homage is correct”).

Through the medium of her revelations, the goddess must provide herself with an adequate celebration on the part of the poet who has invoked her (*ne tuus erret honor*), and this could already give a note of personal interest to Carmenta’s answer. However, the goddess (more or less implicitly, because there is no marker of direct speech between lines 468 and 469 to introduce her report) does her duty, and line 469 opens the poet’s account of the Arcadian origins of Rome (1.469–70): *Orta prior luna—de se si creditur ipsi— / a magno tellus Arcade nomen habet* (“Created before the moon—if you believe their own local traditions—Arcadia is named after mighty Arcas”).

20. For old men as muttering against love and the lifestyle of a love poet see Catull. 5.2, *rumoresque senum severiorum*; Prop. 2.30.13, *senes . . . duri*.

21. With some sense of opportunity, Claudia delivers her supplication to the goddess while wearing an unusually simple hairstyle (4.318, *crine iacente*).

The narrating voice, whether it is that of Ovid reporting or of the goddess speaking directly, shows a perhaps untimely haste in introducing a note of suspicion: are we justified in believing a narrator who tells his own story (*de se si creditur ipsi*)? Propertius's Vertumnus has already warned us that this type of self-reflexiveness can seriously impair the credibility of the informant. The section that follows reflects all too obviously a tendency toward self-celebration: Carmenta is holy, she is the source of Evander's nobility (471–72), she is inspired by the god and her prophecies are infallible (*carmina vera*, 474; *nimum . . . vera*, 477). It is equally obvious that an element of daemonic possession and even of madness is inseparably bound up with her "truth," for we see her dealing frantic kicks to Evander's ship *non sano . . . pede* (1.506) before uttering her prophetic chants, and we cannot help feeling that her name, even if it derives from *carmen*, has some etymological kinship with *car(ere) men(te)*, to be out of one's wits.²²

It is however true that the whole story of Evander's voyage to Rome is not directly narrated by Carmenta's voice. Ovid has invoked the goddess's presence as his inspiration and as the pilot of his poetic vessel (1.466, *deriget in medio quis mea vela freto?*), a particularly appropriate topos in its context because in the narrative that follows Evander's mother will in fact appear as the exile's infallible guide in his journey (499–500, *iamque ratem doctae monitu Carmentis . . . egerat*): voyage as metaphor and voyage as reality are thus made one. If Carmenta differs from other deities in not telling her own story, an effect of greater objectivity is achieved: by taking the stance of epic narrator, Ovid avoids a narrative problem that would affect the credibility of the account. It would be asking too much of the reader that he should accept a prophetess who, after a thousand years and more, recalls her own superexact predictions: far better that an external narrator should give her the credit for such unbounded clairvoyance, just as Tibullus had done for his Sibyls (2.5.39 ff.). A prophet who verifies his own prophecies *ex eventu* with an "I told you so" is always rather offensive, as the readers of Propertius's ambiguous Horus (4.1) well know. But one cannot help feeling that Carmenta's inspiration (*de se si creditur ipsi*) is being supplied to a poet who is writing in a very precise context. The interminable prophecy of 1.515–36 stretches far enough ahead to foresee the advent of Tiberius

22. Note Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 56; so, we might find the Ovidian periphrasis *Maenali diva* (1.634) more than simply learned. Mount Maenalus in Arcadia was felt to be etymologically akin to *μαίνωμαι*, "to be insane."

and the divine honors attributed to Augustus's widow. Thus this section of the *Fasti* can be scrupulously dated to a period after 14 C.E. The divine honors conferred on Livia are a neat point of arrival, because at this time Livia and Carmenta are the only two women in the whole history of Rome to have been elevated to divine status. Nevertheless many readers may be surprised that at this very point—when it would be interesting to hear more—the prophetess's tongue comes to an abrupt halt (1.537–38): *talibus ut dictis nostros descendit in annos / substitit in medios praescia lingua sonos* (“When she got down to the present day, speaking this way her prophetic tongue abruptly stopped”).

This prophecy, like the anticipations and previsions of Augustus codified in the *Aeneid*, is set in the remote past, and in fact Carmenta's arrival in Italy definitely antedates any revelation offered by the *Aeneid*. Carmenta arrives before Aeneas and sees further ahead than Virgil. Virgil had given his readers evocative forecasts that originated in a mythical past, but Carmenta speaks from the context of a poem that is anchored in the reality of Augustan Rome. Ovid, in short, does not cover up the fact that his prophecies are written under dictation, and his explanation of the *Carmentalia* enables the prophetess to confirm *ex eventu* the accuracy of her intuitions. Thus we have a circular validation, which is very different from the astounded Evander's memories in the *Aeneid* (8.335–36, *matrisque egere tremenda / Carmentis nymphae monita*; “I was forced to come by the frightening revelations of my mother, the nymph Carmenta”), and from the reticent confirmation of the poem's narrator (*Aen.* 8.339–41):

Nymphae priscum Carmentis honorem,
vatis fatidicae, cecinit quae prima futuros
Aeneadas magnos et nobile Pallanteum.

Ancient glory of the nymph Carmenta, prophetic seer, she who was the first to announce the future greatness of the line of Aeneas, and the fame of Pallanteum.

Emerging from the mists of epic, Carmenta presents herself as a spokeswoman for the new dynastic requirements and claims of Augustus's family. The words she uses to speak of the imperial succession (“then the grandson and son of a god, although reluctant, will bear with divine spirit the burden handed on by his father”) contain in concentrated form the theology of the principate and “Tiberian” ideology: divine status, burden of rule, *recusatio imperii* are the fixed points of the unwritten constitution by which the succession is regulated. Carmenta is better in-

formed than Ovid, who will later mistakenly declare (1.615, *tanti cognominis heres*) that Tiberius will also desire to inherit the surname Augustus from his adoptive father.²³

Ovid's text is a comment on the prophetic instance that characterizes the *Aeneid*, and it comes very close to the paradoxical criticism that W. H. Auden will level against Virgil as Augustan prophet:²⁴ it is all too easy to write history in the future tense. Why should the prophecies be limited to Romulus and Augustus, and not perhaps be extended to an emperor called Romulus Augustulus who will sell Rome to the barbarians?

Inevitably enough, we have almost lost sight of the narrative situation, which is that of a mother consoling her exiled son with promises of a glorious future and a new kingdom (again a comment on Virgil, where an anguished mother, Venus, obtains Jove's promises for the future of the Julian family). Here too a political code can be read into the text: as there is an explicit comparison between Carmenta and Livia (1.535–36), some readers may tend to reflect that Tiberius too was exiled, and relied heavily on his mother's political support. But the allusion, if it is there, remains undeveloped. It is more important for us to remember that we are reading a rewriting of a famous model, the eighth book of the *Aeneid*, where Carmenta had limited herself to promising "the greatness of Aeneas's descendants and the fame of the hill of Palatine" (8.341). One cannot but admire Virgil's tact in recalling his prophetess's words. From this prophecy Evander learns that the sons of Aeneas will be great together with the Palatine—and this is true, for an emperor who descends from Aeneas is now living on the Palatine—and obviously also with the city that will be built on the Palatine: and if the hill where Rome first rises is called after Evander's son, Pallas, it is clear that a suggestion

23. Conceivably, Carmenta is not only well informed but also versed in political plots. The idea of *recusatio imperii* (cf. 1.533) makes one instinctively glance to Tiberius's situation in 14 C.E. Yet this kind of prophetic statement is by tradition linked to some amount of referential polysemy (why is Virgil so fuzzy about the "Trojan Caesar" at *Aen.* 1.286?) and we may note that "grandson and son of a *divus*" is actually a definition compatible with two, not just one, contemporary personalities. In the era that Carmenta is anticipating by more than a millennium, besides Tiberius we know of one more Roman who could be designated that way: not just Tiberius, son of Augustus and grandson of Julius Caesar, but also Germanicus, son of Tiberius and grandson of Augustus—the one who, according to the first proemium, will recognize in the *Fasti* the deeds of both father and grandfather (1.10). Carmenta's deviousness is a product not only of prophetic discourse but also of the strained relationship between dynastic perspectives and contemporary poetry.

24. In his lyric "Secondary Epic" (1959).

of greatness also rubs off on the family of Evander. At this point in the story, the readers of the *Aeneid* have already realized the tragic side of the future thus predicted. Evander's family will be left without successors, and the young Pallas will be the most illustrious victim sacrificed in the war that will give the Aeneadae their power—just what the aged Evander could not bear to hear. On the departure of his son, the old man makes a heartrending comment (8.574 ff.): “If my son is destined to fall in battle, may I not know it, may I die when the future is still uncertain and my anxiety is full of doubts, and worse news cannot give pain to my ears.” With great tact, Aeneas has already entreated him not to ask for precise information on what the heavenly presages announce (8.532: *ne vero, hospes, ne quaere profecto / quem casum portenta ferant . . .*).²⁵ But Ovid's prophecy delivers this very message to him beforehand (*Fasti* 1.521–22): *Care nepos Palla, funesta quid induis arma? / indue: non humili vindice caesus eris!* (“Dear grandson Pallas, why put it on the fatal armor? Put it on. Your death will be nobly avenged”).

In placing her prophetic voice at the service of the Augustan family, Carmenta destroys that delicate equilibrium between imperial destiny and human sentiment that characterized the *Aeneid*. By accepting in anticipation the Augustan destiny that will require the sacrifice of her grandson Pallas, the prophetic comforter undermines her own autonomy as a character. Her voice is conjured up by the poet who has asked her for inspiration, so that he can write her into his book of days: this play of mirror images between poet and informant binds them together in an inextricable complicity and makes evident their loss of autonomy when the two intertwined voices set themselves to the task of imperial celebration.²⁶ By reducing his characters to their simple function of paving the way for Augustus, Ovid throws onto Virgil's shoulders the burden of the contradictions present in this myth of a Good Man who consigns his own power and the life of his son to the service of another founder and of another dynasty. Carmenta's paradoxical consolation (“things will go better [for the Aeneades] and your son will be killed, but

25. On tensions and ambiguities in the context see my comments in Barchiesi 1984, 74 ff., and now in general the specific study O'Hara 1990.

26. Ovid has forerunners in two great Augustan elegies about prophecy, Tibullus 2.5 and Propertius 4.1. Both poets develop strategies of duplication and ambivalence. Tibullus 2.5 features not one but two prophecies on Rome as seen from the origins, and the two anticipations are dissonant and antithetical. Propertius 4.1 stages two prophets, a poet who becomes the vates of Rome's forthcoming might and an astrologer who undercuts the poet's project through alarming warnings.

he will have the consolation of a noble avenger”) lets the reader in on a secret that was imperfectly kept by Virgil, that these predictions from the mists of antiquity are in fact the product of a pact between the voice of the poet and the regime that demands celebration.

PROTECTED NARRATIVES

The Roman reader’s practiced ear for rhetoric greatly contributes to his appreciation not only of the subjective element but also of the dialogic instance that is present in every act of narration. The fact that individual sections of the *Fasti* are attributed to various informants is thus seen as productive of various effects and implications. The gods have interests of their own to defend, and in his dialogues with the individual deities the poet is subjected to a more or less implicit pressure in the direction of encomium. Each god has his strong points, but he also has his less commendable ones, which the poet prudently casts into shadow by adjusting the lighting. These dialogical situations are in contrast with the moments that are given over to the Augustan voice: when the act of poetic celebration shifts from the gods to the prince’s family, the values expressed cease to be relative and negotiable, and their place is taken by the affirmation of a fixed series of truths, transmitted by an unhesitating voice and showing a perfect identification between narrative authority and political authority. The gods themselves are the principal celebrators of the imperial cult.

Between these contrasting areas in the *Fasti*, there is a narrow shadowy zone, made up of narratives where the Augustan instance is only indirect, but which are all the same committed to the ideology of “Romanness.” In these cases, the guarantees provided by the inspiring or narrating gods are particularly weak. While the poet protects his Augustan messages from any type of erosion, he leaves the stories of earlier Rome unprotected. The apparition of the shade of Remus, the improbable cause of the *Lemuria* and the unbelievable exculpator of Romulus from the crime of fratricide (see part II, chapter 3 above), is narrated by the god of lies and of cunning, Mercury.²⁷ The version of the death of Remus in 4.809 ff. is nothing less than an apology for Romulus, and the tendentious nature of the account is glossed by the very invocation of the god that acts as its prologue, and that by rights should ensure a relation-

27. See Harries 1989, 177–80 (sometimes unclear, but suggestive).

ship of truth between the poet and his subject matter (4.807–8): *Urbis origo / venit: ades factis, magne Quirine, tuis!* (“I have come to the city’s origin: be present, great Quirinus, for these deeds of yours!”).

The poet uses his own initiative in listing at least seven alternative causes for the ritual of the *Parilia*, but he ends up accepting the traditional (but not compulsory) link between this April festival and the foundation of Rome. His *urbis origo*, which will reveal itself to be biased in favor of the surviving twin, is placed under the sign of the god Quirinus. In case the reader might have any doubts about this, the *Fasti* has already explained (2.475–76) that Quirinus is none other than the heavenly continuation of Romulus. Thus we have a god who is overseeing the account of his own deeds when he was a mortal, and it is not surprising that the result should be of an apologetic nature.

As informants, Ovid’s gods are an illustration of the Alexandrian principle which sees the authority for an account as self-undermining and the recuperation of stories from the antique past as evidence of the precariousness of tradition and the subjectivity of the act of narrating. But as observers with personal interests in Ovid’s work, these gods suggest a more pressing message.

There is in fact a voice that is more powerful than they are, an imperial voice to which the whole poem is subjected: while each divine instance can only be specific to a certain area and its pressures occasional, the Caesars are constantly present, and their attention is not intermittent. From start to finish the *Fasti* presents itself as a text that is conditioned by the regime, and the poet’s relationship with the gods of Olympus is only a weaker figurative version of this relationship of power. The reader is invited to reconstruct the hierarchy governing the various levels of constriction: behind the explicit interventions of Juno and of the other deities who jealously defend their prerogatives in the calendar, there looms the loftier authority of the emperor, which strictly excludes any possibility of deviation.

THE KIDNAPPING OF VESTA

If we keep in mind the more or less obvious presence of such a code of ideological reference, we may be able to indicate significant differences in the ways the gods are treated. There are at least two deities who merit a privileged voice, Mars and Vesta, and their important role in the poem is proportionate to the weight they carry in the Augustan rewriting of the

Roman pantheon. We have already come to certain conclusions regarding the presence of Mars in his significant role as avenger.²⁸ Ovid unreservedly accepts the requalification of the god brought about by the Augustan religious culture, but what emerges from the poem is not perhaps the desired result, for the god's militarism is subjected to a series of ironical and distancing effects.

Ovid's treatment of Vesta is even more indicative. The attention that he gives to her in the final (fifth and sixth) books of the *Fasti* can only be explained in one way: that is, by the extraordinary increase in her standing that the prince has recently brought about by means of spectacular operations on her cult and image. No other explanation is possible: Mars was bound to feature anyway in a poem about Roman antiquities (for example, as a character in the legend of Romulus, a model already emphatically proposed in Ennius's *Annales*), but Vesta is a far more evanescent figure, not easy to narrate, and thus Ovid's efforts to make her function as a character are the more admirable. In fact, in considering the concomitance between these efforts on Ovid's part and Augustus's interests, Augusto Frascchetti goes so far as to describe the *Fasti* as a "an extremely faithful reverberation" of "extensively shared ideological nuclei."²⁹

The central nucleus of this adhesion to the Augustan program is revealed to the reader at the end of the fourth book (949 ff.), in a passage that we have already examined in the light of the curious coincidence between two very different celebrations.³⁰ The calendar obliges the poet to celebrate the transfer of "Vesta" (we shall see later how problematic this religious signifier is) within the walls of Augustus's house on the Palatine. The impact of this initiative can hardly be overestimated, because, for the first time in Rome's history, it brings about a close integration between state cults and "private" cults, a fusion that is natu-

28. See above, pp. 62 ff., and already in part I, where I discuss politics and poetry in more general terms. Mars Ultor is the focus of the Ovidian exegesis of the Forum Augusti (5.549–98, *arma . . . arma . . . Mars venit . . . Ultor ad ipse suos caelo descendit honores . . . Mars . . . Gradivum . . . perspicit Armipotens . . . probat . . . perspicit . . . videt . . . videt . . . spectat . . . visum . . . deo . . . fortem deum*). This is more than an inauguration: the control of the patron god over the monument and its meaning is stressed, step by step, and Ovid states insistently that his view of the Forum cannot be dissociated from the presence of Mars.

The analysis of Scheid 1992, 126–29, is vitiated precisely because this exceptional effect of "narrative trusteeship" is overlooked.

29. Frascchetti 1990a, 347, in the context of a useful discussion of the transformation of Vesta in Augustan culture.

30. Above, pp. 133 ff.

rally only made possible by the great polyvalence of the self-image constructed by Augustus, which is in continual oscillation between formerly separate symbolic spaces.

But Ovid still has to define a symbolic identity for the goddess who has publicly taken up her dwelling with Augustus. He does this in a long analysis, placed in his sixth book (249–60) and introduced by a solemn declaration:

Vesta, fave: tibi nunc operata resolvimus ora,
ad tua si nobis sacra venire licet.
In prece totus eram: caelestia numina sensi,
laetaque purpurea luce refulsit humus.
Non equidem vidi—valeant mendacia vatum—
te dea, nec fueras adspicienda viro;
sed quae nescieram, quorumque errore tenebar
cognita sunt nullo praecipiente mihi.

Vesta, be favorable. To you I now open my lips in devotion, if I am permitted to come to your ritual. While absorbed in prayer I felt a divine presence and the floor shone joyously with purple light. Of course I didn't see you—so long, poetic license—you are not a goddess for a man to behold, but I've learned with no human teacher what I didn't know while confusion had me in its grip.

This time the poet has changed his tactics. No more dialogues, just mystical telepathy. The goddess is not questioned, and her voice is not directly heard in the text. The poet presents his own voice as one of prayer, through which he makes his first approach to the deity in a solemn invocation, and he is visited by an immaterial presence. A dazzling light illuminates the earth, a fitting miracle for a divinity who, as will be later seen, has a double and mysterious identity, as both Earth and Fire. For once Ovid does without a direct interview: “Of course I did not see you—so long, poetic license!” And thus our narrator rejects the conventional methods of approach to the divine on which he has based much of his poem. Evidently Vesta, unlike so many of her colleagues, has no visible form—at least none visible to masculine eyes (6.254). Not by chance, she is a goddess without myths, and it is difficult for a poet to visualize her. But the poet is compensated for this nonexistent vision with the revelation of the truths behind a cult that he finds obscure.

From this prologue on, therefore, we expect our exegetist to show himself to be well informed and confident. Yet we may however retain some doubts about this, when we note that the first line following Vesta's epiphany (6.257) contains a sentence governed by the verb *memorant*:

so the narrator still needs tradition? Actually, the more diffracted the themes of the revelation are, the clearer and more decisive Ovid's tone becomes: Vesta is the earth itself; she is like the earthly globe; she is a virgin daughter of Saturn; she is simply the flame on the hearth; she has no form and no image; her name is that of the earth that supports itself by its own forces (Vesta = *vi stat*) as it is also that of the hearth (Greek *Hestia*); she is the first divinity that we invoke in litanies and it is no accident that she is the goddess of *vestibules*, the first part, the entrance, to every dwelling. Many of these explanations however converge and agree, hinging on one of the most evident features of Vesta's cult, its monopoly on the part of virgin priestesses. The Vestals are virgins because the goddess is a virgin (a virgin sister of the married goddesses Ceres and Juno) and because she is fire, fire that cannot generate. As a divine virgin and as fire (although her identification with the earth is still to be explained) the goddess only accepts the company of carefully selected females. We have come back to the reasons that prevent a male poet from interviewing her.

But Ovid's introduction ("what I did not know and what I was unsure about was revealed to me without informants") can also be read in a deviant way: we may have a reversal of poets' usual "lies" in front of us, but this reversal is even more insidious. In fact, there are some surprising points in this information, which Ovid clearly "did not know." Vesta is presented as the first divine power to be invoked in prayers, but any Roman could have objected that she is the last one: in formal prayers the first place belongs to Janus, and Vesta comes last³¹ (it may not be accidental that Janus is the dominating figure in the first book and Vesta in the sixth book, the last one that Ovid published). The fact is that compared to the other gods, very little is definitely known about Vesta. Let us take the question of her noniconic nature. "Stupid that I was," Ovid condemns himself, "for a long time I thought there were images of Vesta in her temple, but then I learned that there were none: Vesta, like fire, has no image" (6.295 ff.). If this is true, one must nevertheless remember that (according to the diction of the official calendars) Augustus had welcomed the arrival of a *signum* of the goddess in his house.³² What rela-

31. The rule is explicitly attested by Cic. *Nat. deor.* 2.67; a confirmation—but only an oblique one (Porte 1985a, 255 n. 326, is inexact, but useful for its bibliography)—comes from passages like Vell. 2.131, and even Verg. *G.* 1.498, where Vesta closes the list of the gods in situations clearly influenced by a formal liturgy. On the idea that Vesta's initial placement could derive from interference with Greek *Hestia*, see Porte 1985a, 255–56.

32. For problems in this report see Fraschetti 1990a, 342–45, with bibliography.

relationship is there between this “portrait” and the mysterious “vacuum” in the traditional *aedes Vestae* in the Roman Forum? Ovid himself (in his former “stupidity”) told us that the images of Vesta (3.45–46) had covered their eyes with their hands when an Alban Vestal gave birth to the founder of Rome. One may wonder whether Vesta has at least a voice of her own. In the sixth book, as we have seen, the poet only senses a divine presence, but in other contexts he makes the goddess speak, and always for the direct benefit of Augustus: once to praise his vengeance on Caesar’s murderers (3.698, *cum sic a castis Vesta locuta foci*), and a second time, unexpectedly, to spoil the Parthians’ joy in their victory at Carrhae by predicting the advent of an avenger (6.467: “*Parthe, quid exultas?*” *dixit dea* . . .). One has the impression that Vesta has a voice only when she is defending a well-defined interest. Or else one might imagine that in some way the goddess has split herself into two. If the “chaste altars” of which she speaks in 3.698 are the new cult objects in Augustus’s palace, as is perfectly possible, this suggests that a change is taking place in the way that Vesta is envisaged in Roman culture. The traditional representation of the gods is dividing up, and traces of this process are left in the text.

The connection, obvious in itself, between Vesta and virginity raises further problems. Ovid starts up two parallel arguments in order to explain the institution of the Vestal virgins: first, Vesta is a virgin daughter of Saturn, and second, Vesta is fire which does not procreate. What is worrying here is not so much this difference in explanatory levels in itself (Vesta seen as a goddess in a Greek-type pantheon, and Vesta seen as a natural element), but rather the implications that each of these explanations suggests. We can easily visualize Vesta as a sister of Juno and Ceres, and in fact a little later we see how her female body risks being violated by Priapus,³³ but in that case how are we to explain the information about the absence of any cult image? Again, if Vesta is fire, and fire does not generate, we are puzzled when, in this same sixth book, Ovid tells the story of how Servius Tullius, king of Rome, was born of a hearth that was gifted with the ability to procreate (6.631 ff.).

This collection of minor incompatibilities leads us to a more important point. As an antiquarian, Ovid is extremely interested in a dominant feature of the cult of Vesta in the republican period, the fact that the presence of any male is excluded on principle from this major state cult. The *pontifex maximus* controls the Vestals from outside, but he cannot

33. Above, pp. 136–39.

set foot inside the temple. The secret pledges of the Empire are only accessible to women. The Vestals are punishable with fearful tortures if they break their rule of sexual segregation (but under Augustus, Ovid reassures us, there will be no more scandals of this kind: 6.457 ff.). The crucial point of Vesta's status as a goddess is her separation from the masculine.

It is fascinating however to note how often Ovid brings us to the very edges of this prohibition. He is the only poet to tell us the story of the miraculous intervention by which Vesta carried off the body of her *pontifex* Julius Caesar (3.701): *ipsa virum rapui*. . . . And the word *virum* reminds us, unnecessarily for the purposes of the narrative, that a scandalous event has taken place: Vesta has had some contact with a male, after all, and the verb *rapio* makes us think of a curious reciprocity with the masculine sphere. But we can also find evidence for a contact in the opposite direction. Ovid also gives space to the story of Metellus's rescue of the sacred pledges of the empire from the burning temple of Vesta (6.436 ff.). This heroic deed is narrated in an atmosphere of subtle sexual polarization: the terrified Vestals lack *vires* (442) when Metellus urges them to use their *virgineae* hands (445) to *rapere* (446) the pledges from the crypt in flames; in the end he decides to do it himself, in a well-motivated act of sacrilege: *vir intrabo non adeunda viro* (450). Metellus breaks in (453) and the *dea rapta* (453) approves and pardons his action. This insistence on the verb *rapere* is suspect, seeing that we have witnessed an attempt to rape Vesta in flesh and blood (319 ff.). The more contact there is between Vesta's virginity and the world of *vir*, the more the poet reminds us that a grave prohibition is at risk. The observation of this sexual ban is accompanied by the solemn duty of preventing the sacred pledges entrusted to Vesta's keeping from being moved from their place. We can quote the evidence of the god Mars, who deplores the fact that when Rome was overwhelmed by the invading Gauls these sacred symbols actually had to be transferred elsewhere (6.365–66): *vidimus Iliacae transferri pignora Vestae / sede: putant aliquos scilicet esse deos!* ("I have witnessed the talismans of Trojan Vesta moved from her dwelling to safety").

It is not in the interests of a good Roman to reveal exactly what it was that Aeneas brought away from Troy, or the nature of the numinous objects that are guarded in the depths of the temple without images. There is however some room for doubts about their authenticity. Ovid tells us that he learned the story of the Palladium as a child (6.417, *puerilibus annis*). A statue had fallen from the skies on to the hills of Troy: now it

is kept as a pledge in the temple of Vesta. Who brought it away from Troy? *Auctor in incerto est, res est Romana* (435); the author of the action (or else the authority for the story?) is uncertain, but what is clear is that the Palladium is in Rome. Yet Ovid himself admits that he does not know who brought the sacred pledge away from Troy: Diomedes, Ulysses, or Aeneas (6.433–34). Ulysses is a specialist in theft, and he stole the Palladium in the epic cycle. According to Callimachus (*Hymn*. 5.166–73), one of the poets that Ovid uses most in the *Fasti*, Diomedes took the Palladium to Argos. If either of them appropriated the statue, and not Aeneas, the whole story rests on a shaky foundation. And what about the *ancilia*, the shields that conceal in their number a sacred pledge fallen from the skies? The poet has recourse to a move of the “take it or leave it” kind; the heavens opened, and a shield came slowly spiraling down on a breath of air (3.370): *credite dicenti: mira, sed acta loquor* (“Believe what I say. It’s amazing, but it happened”).

Once again, the wording of the guarantee is ambiguous: *mira sed acta* can be “miraculous things, but real, things that actually happened,” or else “marvelous things, but contained in the *acta* (*diurna*),” those chronicles packed with miracles and curiosities which are normally consulted in cases like this, and which are not necessarily a more reliable source of authority than the poet’s appeal to “believe me, if I tell you so.”

Ovid the antiquarian is perfectly aware that Vesta has a greater right to impenetrability than any other deity. There are good reasons why the pledges in her keeping should remain mysterious. But the hostility between Vesta and the masculine world, emphasized by the narrator, comes to a precise end with the new calendar, because now, on a day that the Senate declares to be a festival, Vesta takes up residence as a guest in a house, which is both private and public in carefully measured proportions according to the situation, and the house belongs to a male, that is, to the new *pontifex maximus* Caesar Augustus. Now Augustus has the unapproachable goddess in his own house (he lives in “what is left over” of it, 4.952), he cohabits with the image of a goddess that is *non adeunda viro*, and he even touches her (*tangit*, 3.425), under the protection of a bond of kinship (*cognati*, 4.949) that has been cleverly conjured up from the ashes of Troy (3.425) with the decisive help of Virgil. The poet participates with relish in the series of subtle mediations which enable the prince to achieve the monopoly of a great traditional state cult, but at the same time he also takes pleasure in reentangling the problems that this process of appropriation had smoothed out. Here again categories like “propaganda” and “opposition” would be quite

inadequate to account for what is happening in the text. But the antiquarian evidence cannot be said to collaborate with Augustus's appropriation either. A goddess that has neither a voice nor a public image, who is connected with fire and with the earthly globe, and who is unapproachable by males, has been kidnapped and given new values by Augustan discourse, which puts her on display in the prince's house as part of what is, at least implicitly, a heavenly threesome: Apollo-Vesta-Augustus. If the aim of Augustan discourse is to make this appear as a natural and continuous process, the *Fasti* does not assist it here. The dubious and fragmentary form that is typical of the Callimachean tradition, and the contradictions that are typical of antiquarian discourse, make up a picture in which the dominating notes are those of discontinuity and the difficulty of bringing the past to life. This is apparently the real lesson that Callimachus has to offer, that of a bifocal poetry that draws its nourishment from the gap in time and culture between the Egyptian capital and the libraries that keep classical Greece alive. But Ovid, whose feet are firmly fixed in his own Rome, recuperates these poetic modes, fragmentary and discontinuous, ironical and self-reflexive, for use in a very different context. For the Alexandrians, the problematic relationship with their origins was a question of models of life and of cultural research, and this is constantly reflected and made up for in their poetry; but in the Rome of Augustus, the question of the relationship with the past concerns rather the acceptance of an ideology and the legitimization of a rule.

THE CITY'S AND THE PRINCE'S GODS

A comparable problem confronts the reader of the great prayer that concludes the *Metamorphoses* (15.861–70).³⁴ At first sight, Ovid appears to be following the model of the great prayer that concludes the first book of the *Georgics* (1.498–501). The divinities most closely connected with the existence of the Roman community are invited to extend their protection to the young (at the time of the *Georgics*) Octavian: there can be no hope for Rome without him. Ovid is now simply adapting Virgil's example to the new situation. It is no longer a question of overcoming a universal crisis and assisting a youthful savior, but of prolonging as far as possible the life of the man who in the meantime has become ruler of the cosmos (15.859, *quem temperat orbe*), an example of the typical *vo-*

34. Feeney 1991, 210–17, is now a fundamental analysis.

tum pro salute principis that has recently become a normal part of civic duty. Here again we find divinities that are traditionally identified with the state: the Penates, Mars, and Vesta reappear to confirm Virgil's earlier prayer, and this is a perfectly natural choice, for the Penates represent Rome's Trojan origins, Vesta her continuity with these origins, and Mars her founding power and genealogical divinity. We can compare Ovid's prayer with another that is closer to it in time (the prayer from the *Georgics* is at least forty years earlier than the conclusion of the *Metamorphoses*, and it is confusing to speak of an "Augustan age"): that is, with an epilogue belonging to a different genre, the conclusion of Velleius Paterculus's *Histories* (2.131). It is worth our while to quote the entire text:³⁵

I must end my volume with a prayer. O Jupiter Capitolinus and Mars Gradivus, author and stay of the Roman name, Vesta, guardian of the eternal fire, and all other divinities who have exalted the great empire of Rome to the highest point yet reached on earth! On you I call and to you I pray in the name of this people. Guard, preserve, protect the present state of things, the peace which we enjoy, the present emperor, and when he has filled his post of duty—and may it be the longest granted to mortals—grant him successors until the latest time, but successors whose shoulders may be as capable of sustaining bravely the empire of the world as we have found his to be. . . .

This solemn piece of lyrical prose shows remarkable similarities with the conclusion of the *Metamorphoses*. Like the poet Ovid, the historian Velleius covers a long stretch of time in his work: Ovid goes from the chaos that generated the gods to the times of Caesar, and Velleius from Rome's prehistory up to his own times, the second half of Tiberius's reign. Both these authors use the final prayer as a substitute for treating both the present time and future expectations. From the point of view of an official piece of writing, as a historical work and to some degree also an epic poem are considered to be, panegyric and prayer are quite simply the compulsory means of continuing the historical narrative into contemporary times. Like the poet Ovid, Velleius is faced with the situation of an aging prince and an atmosphere of perpetual dynastic crisis: there is no need to read the prayer as a simple literary convention divorced from the reality of the times. But if the prayer has its own responsibilities, and has a message to communicate, a greater degree of significance must be attached to the selection and the qualification of the deities it invokes.

35. The reading by Woodman 1975, 16–17, is useful.

These decisions cannot be seen as casual, and any Roman reader—for the very reason that the formula is traditional and compulsory—would have been sensitive even to the slightest nuances in such a crucial phase of the work. Velleius's choice falls on Capitoline Jove, the god of the city, on Mars, the origin and defender of the Roman name, and on Vesta, the guardian of the perpetual fire (plus the sum of the other powers that have assisted Rome). This is an official community choice, and the prayer is a public one—after all it is a prayer in favor of an individual whose central role and whose “greater than individual” dimension must be reaffirmed. The very fact that he is conforming to the recent ruler-cult obliges Velleius to invoke divine figures that represent the stability of the *respublica* and continuity with the past.

Ovid's selection and qualification act in exactly the opposite direction. The prayer opens on what we can define as a “community” note, with the Penates and the Indigetes (from the *Georgics*, 1.498), but then it immediately slides onto another level: Vesta is not the usual public goddess of the Roman people, but a goddess *Caesareos inter sacrata Penates*; Phoebus Apollo is absorbed (also on the verbal level) into the prince's household: *et cum Caesarea tu, Phoebe domestice, Vesta*. The context also effects a change in the values of other divinities named: Mars is not the old figure from the agrarian pantheon, but Augustus's new god of war; Quirinus is brought in as the sign of Romulus's apotheosis, so important to the emperor's image; the Jove of the Tarpeian rock may no longer be the familiar Capitoline Jove, the Optimus Maximus of the tradition to which Velleius dutifully refers, but the new Jupiter Tonans who is growing ever greater through Augustus's intervention. . . . In other words, the poet has emphasized the new “domestic” status of the old community deities and the results of the process of appropriation and alteration that Augustan discourse has brought about in the world of the gods. This operation on Ovid's part is highly ambivalent. On the one hand the poet can present himself as a powerful ally of the new religious discourse: the new divinities can profit from the consecration that poetry is able to offer—what would the gods of Olympus have been, basically, without Homer, and the gods that protected Aeneas without Virgil? Impressively, by the end of *Metamorphoses* 15 Augustus will travel to heaven without any support from traditional gods: “very much a do-it-yourself job,”³⁶ as opposed to the divinely assisted deifications of Alexandrian rulers. But it is also true, on the other hand, that

36. Shanmugam 1995, 124.

Ovid is not giving life to a new mythology, and he is not serving his commissioning patron very well. By overemphasizing the creation of new cults—the Vesta of Augustus's house, the “domestic” Apollo—the poet draws a closed circle that excludes the symbols of the city's collective identity. If the prince's divine guarantors lose their independence and their traditional status, revealing themselves as simple projections of his commanding voice, the temptation may arise to abandon such celebratory language. The poem undermines its own celebratory function and diminishes the authority of its gods in order to indicate that the present regime has no further need of divine prophets and guarantors.

The Causes and Messages of Rites: Recuperation of the Antique

The erudite genre of the *aition* invites the poet to establish a relationship between the communicative content (if it can be so called) of the rite or festival and the circumstances from which it took its origin. The “message” of the rite or festival can be validated by its origins, more or less remote in time, and the juxtaposition between the rite’s origin and its current practice gives rise to comparisons and contrasts. In this way the poet plays on a double temporal plane, and in following this tradition Ovid shows how these two planes, origins and present ceremony, can generate not only a play of mirrors but also other more problematic effects.

The confrontation between past and present is a delicate point of what we generally refer to here as “Augustan discourse.” In its use of language, images, and many other aspects of Roman life, Augustan discourse follows a double objective. Its most obvious aim is to achieve a systematic appropriation, and thus an all-embracing monopoly, of all the symbols both of rule and of Rome’s national identity. But the cultural significance of this operation lies above all in its claims that this process of appropriation is a *natural* development, and the consolidation of tradition. This renewed interest in the past not only encourages that respect and care for the antique that was already present in a conservative society like that of Rome, but it also fuels a real industry of cultural archaeology, intended to strengthen the sense of Roman identity. In this light,

all definitions of what is to be intended as traditional, antique, and natural, as well as the relationship between these definitions and the image of the present, are, potentially at least, political moves.

Aetiological poetry derives from the Alexandrian writers' combination of "modern" experiences and cultural apartness, but it also becomes involved in this complex state of affairs. It is hard for the poet to remain neutral when the reconstruction of the past brings significant cultural oppositions into play—ancient versus modern, rustic versus urban, national versus foreign—and is expected to give a verdict on the public message that might be implicit in each festival.

TERMINUS AND THE BOUNDARY STONES OF ROMAN IDENTITY

In the midst of these oppositions, the connection with the Greek world plays an important part in the *Fasti*. This learned source of references allows Ovid to introduce variations, often unexpected, to complicate the picture. This "Grecian" background can clash with the aim of tracing a line of continuity between present and past. Among many possible examples for discussion, the festival of the *Terminalia* can offer us a good reference point—or landmark.

The divinity it celebrates, Terminus, is a robust champion of lasting "Romanness." He is not only antique, autochthonous, and stable in his values, but he is himself a symbol of authenticity and rootedness. The god's nature, as the immovable guarantor of boundaries, clearly confirms the values that his festival is supposed to foster. An unchanging ritual (2.639, *solito celebretur honore*) venerates Terminus as the guardian of boundaries and the protector of agrarian order. Terminus's irremovable presence on the Capitolium bears witness to the stability of Roman power (Livy 1.55) and its continuance in time. Even the recent (that is, going back to the period of the Tarquins!) attempts at rebuilding on the Capitolium (2.667, *nova cum fierent Capitolia*) were forced to give way in front of Terminus's steadfast immobility. The cult of the boundary-stone god marks Rome's most ancient limit, six miles out of the town, and at the same time suggests by contrast the boundless extension of the empire (2.681 ff.). By a curious coincidence, this boundary stone stands on the road to the kingdom that a Trojan hero had come to conquer for himself (2.679 ff.). Terminus thus proclaims order and continuity, but does not come into conflict with Roman

expansionism.¹ The rural atmosphere surrounding his cult reminds us of the serene *Ambarvalia* of Tibullus 2.1. In a ritual silence (2.654, *linguis candida turba faveat*), as in the opening of Tibullus's poem (Tib. 2.1.1: *Quisquis adest, faveat*), the poet lingers over the details of the rustic offerings made according to the rules of the antique celebration (Tib. 2.1.2, *ritus ut a prisco traditus exstat avo*). In the spirit of the "candid" Tibullus,² he repeats the ritual words uttered by the *vicinia simplex* (2.657), among which there is a passage that occasioned the irritated wit of Sir James Frazer:

We are apparently intended to understand the following outburst of psalmody as a hymn to Terminus chanted by a tuneful choir of country bumpkins. But it needs no Bentley to perceive that the psalmist is Ovid himself. The poet could not attune his sweet notes to the gruff voices of the groundlings.³

We may doubt whether Ovid was incapable of producing something more appropriate, if he had wanted to: after all, Tibullus had managed to achieve a balance between maintaining his own "sweet notes" and imitating the simplicity of common speech. But let us also read the passage that Frazer quite rightly marked out for indignation (2.663–66):

Si tu signasses olim Thyreatida terram,
corpora non leto missa trecenta forent,
nec foret Othryades congestis lectus in armis:
o quantum patriae sanguinis ille dedit!

If you had marked the borderland at Thyrea, the Three Hundred would not have met their death, and Othryades would not have been gathered up [or "read": see below] on the mound of weapons: so great a gift of blood he offered to his fatherland!

In fact, the death of the Spartan hero Othryades during a frontier war with the Argives is a classic example of the marking of boundaries with blood. But from the distribution of the surviving sources for this information, which regards interstate relations in the archaic history of the

1. On Augustan interest in the cult of Terminus, note an epigraphic source in Pollini 1990, 349 (the Boundary suggests that Octavian has a divine mission to broaden the limits of the Empire: on the ideology of expansion, more comments in Gruen 1990, 409–16).

2. Since the frame of the episode is marked by Tibullan echoes, and the praying *turba* is a precise match for the joyful people of Tib. 2.1, it could be that *candida* should work as a kind of metaliterary index: an identification of the model, which is literary "naïf," not folkloric voice. Horace had made famous the "candor" of Albius Tibullus in his apostrophe to him *candide iudex* (*Ep.* 1.6.1), probably with a pun on the "whiteness" contained in the praenomen "Albius."

3. Frazer on 2.659, quoted and discussed in Miller 1992, 121, who offers a good comparison between Ovid and the poetics of folk festivals in Tibullus.

Peloponnese, we can be sure that this story could not have been part of the cultural baggage of a Latian *rusticus*; it is an anecdote from Herodotus, a theme for sophisticated Hellenistic epigrams, a subject for learned exercises in declamation.⁴ Ovid's treatment of it is refined and epigrammatic, and it is addressed to people who already know the story; Othryades killed himself on a trophy built with the arms of the fallen Argives, which he himself had heaped up in order to mark and claim the disputed boundary in Sparta's favor, and with his blood he wrote a message of victory on the conquered arms. For the erudite reader, *lectus*⁵ means both "was gathered up" (his corpse) and "was read" (his message): the story is about a very special kind of inscription, and perhaps that explains its popularity among Hellenistic epigrammatists.

At this point the reader has to suspend his credulity and, like Frazer, must recognize the learned voice of Ovid drowning the plain words of the simple country people, although their tones do emerge again at times in the prayer: *clamato* "*Tuus est hic ager, ille tuus!*" (2.678). But the story of Othryades unmasks even these pretences at popular writing. It is typical that an Alexandrian poet should keep himself and his readers aware of the gap between reality and subjective recall. But it is also ironic that these bookish effects (taken down from the shelf marked "Greek rarities") should have infiltrated the ritual formulery of a festival dedicated to the god of boundaries, who ought to guard the Roman identity and maintain its national characteristics. The word *lectus* in line 665 can be seen as the precise signal of this operation: the band of peasants has "read" this passage from Greek history and is able to quote it. In fact, Ovid notes a few lines later, the *Urbs* has become as wide as the *Orbis* (2.684), resulting in a cosmopolitan outlook that is also a cultural relativism.

It is worth noting that the strategy of superimposing Latin festivals on festivals of classical Greece is a constant in Roman antiquarian thinking. The most important extant fragment of Accius's *Annales* (3 Büchner) makes an interesting parallel between the *Saturnalia* and the *Kronia*. In the *Georgics* (2.380 ff.) Virgil crosses the *Compitalia* and other Italic rural festivals with the Athenian feasts in honor of Dionysus to such a degree that it becomes difficult to identify the "original" characteristics of the Italic feasts that the poet intends to describe. Comparisons, and

4. Novellas: Hdt. 1.82; epigrams: Gow and Page 1965, 2:220–21; declamations: Sen. *Suas.* 2.2.

5. Barth's correction for the transmitted *tectus*.

also confusion, are normal when the Roman researcher digs deeply into the meaning of the national festivities, and the demand for national roots is not seen as incompatible with the unearthing of a "Grecian" model. But Ovid goes even further, because he cuts off the inquiry at its roots—that sense of a genuine popular element which is still deposited in the festival's prayers and rites, and which could be recuperated. His peasants who speak like late Alexandrian epigrammatists are the proof that this aetiological poet is muddying the waters of his own sources and is prompting his witnesses to echo his own voice.

We therefore have to admit that the *Fasti* confuses the distinction between a modern voice and what ought to have the value of an authentic and original testimonial of the past. This is no small problem, if we consider that this authentic "material" from the antique past ought to contain a basic message, which is to be recuperated and defended each time. The aim of the exegesis of Rome's festivals is to reconstruct these paradigms, and it ought to protect their modern derivations from arbitrary shifts of meaning. The Augustan causes are by nature clear and univocal, and they are guaranteed by the stone of the Praenestine *Fasti* because, in line with the traditional signs for the days, we can read: *F XIX EN corona querna uti super ianuam domus imp. Caesaris Augusti poneretur senatus decrevit quod rem publicam p.R.restituit.*

The cause—"because he restored the republic"—is fixed and incorporated in the festive anniversary, and the celebration's message is as important as the celebration itself, for it too has a part in defining what is meant by two such useful but highly problematic concepts as "restore" and "republic."⁶

But political discourse also attributes great significance to the causes of the more ancient festivals. A policy of restoration and defense of these cults aims at recuperating important aspects of Rome's national identity. The idea on which these operations are based is well known and is no novelty in Roman culture: the present is seen as a struggle against degeneration, and is inspired by a free trade area in the remotest past. There is always an earliest past, unconnected with the recent past, and it is there that positive models for recuperation are looked for. This framework of Roman thought can account for certain compositional patterns in republican historiography, for example, which Badian has tellingly likened to an hourglass:⁷ the Latin historian concentrates on the epoch that is

6. "A Roman myth" in the approach developed by Mackie 1986.

7. Badian 1966, 11.

close to him, plus a period that is very remote and unconnected with it, while giving little attention to the intermediate periods. The general effect is that of measuring the present against a past that serves as its example.

In Augustan discourse, this traditional attitude takes on vital importance. The city's time is organized around the idea of a "good" and remote past (which can often even be associated with the Golden Age) and a recent past characterized by decadence and wickedness. The present time, under Augustus, must be both an expiation for the recent past and a return to Rome's origins: in this *res publica restituta*, the prince has effigies made of himself renewing ancient sacrificial rites as a mirror and counterpart to Aeneas making offerings to the gods or Romulus casting auguries. One of the reasons for the great importance and diffusion of this visual representation of the sacrifice is that this rite is repeated in time and guarantees its own origins. The rituals carry great responsibility, since they are the main vectors of identification with the "good" past, and they can transmit "constructive" messages, not only as a result of their venerable antiquity but also because meaningful associations can collect around them. The work of the exegetist thus makes a critical contribution to a much wider strategy.⁸

VENUS TAKES A BATH

The evidence provided by 1 April is intricate, but the day is rich in points that can illustrate this argument. It is also an example of how the religious-historical point of view tends by its very nature to simplify and "naturalize" the reading of the *Fasti*. According to this type of exegetical approach, what is interesting in Ovid's poem emerges once the reader has managed to overcome a certain degree of resistance and ambiguity in the text, and is able to extract the material that corresponds factually with what antiquarian sources suggest. Stripped of its complexity in this way, the page dedicated to 1 April confirms and integrates the data provided by parallel sources. Apparently, according to the sum of the information in our possession, certain references to cults converge on this particular day:

8. It is interesting to compare the results of Untermann 1988, 445, on the function of linguistic archaism in Augustan culture: the "old" forms which are being grafted are mostly "reconstructions" of "old style" forms—no claim to precision or consistency, but a high symbolic investment.

1. a generic association between Venus and the calends of April, indicated as *Veneralia* in Philocalus's late calendar;
2. the cult of *Fortuna Virilis*, connected with sexual desire, in which women—*humiliores*, according to the Praenestine calendar—showed themselves naked in the men's public baths;
3. the remembrance of the institution of a temple to *Venus Verticordia* (216 B.C.E.) by order of the Sibylline books.

These three references—to Venus in general, to *Fortuna Virilis*, and to *Venus Verticordia*—are all confirmed by Ovid and have a clear common feature, that it was the female sex that played the leading part in the various traditional aspects of this day.

At this point the religious historian is tempted to arrest his reading of Ovid and proceed to a "synthetic" interpretation, all the more so because what is left over in Ovid after this analysis is nothing more than exegesis, poetic adaptation and a sum of "expressive modules."⁹ For example, the thematic correspondence between washing the statue of Venus (4.133 ff.) and *Fortuna's* cult in the steam of the public baths (4.145 ff.) does in fact look like an "expressive module," an initiative taken by the narrator who wants to provide these various aspects of the religious tradition with a common atmosphere, in order to make them into a unified page of elegiac poetry. Nakedness, baths, and female sexuality: Ovid rewrites these themes in a continuous form that the antiquarian finds misleading (because he would like more precision in the account of each ritual) and the religious historian finds suggestive but not factual. The text is complex, and one has the impression that there is a sliding of referents as it progresses, so in spite of its length, it is worth our while to quote it in full (4.133–62):

Rite deam colitis, Latiae matresque nurusque
 et vos, quis vittae longaue vestis abest!
 Aurea marmoreo redimicula demite collo,
 demite divitias! Tota lavanda dea est.
 Aurea siccato redimicula reddite collo!
 nunc alii flores, nunc nova danda rosa est.
 Vos quoque sub viridi myrto iubet ipsa lavari
 causaque cur iubeat, discite, certa subest.
 Litore siccabat rorantes nuda capillos;
 viderunt satyri, turba proterva, deam.

9. The approach of Sabbatucci 1988, 120.

Sensit, et opposita textit sua corpora myrto:
 tuta fuit facto vosque referre iubet.
 Discite nunc, quare Fortunae tura Virili
 detis eo, calida qui locus umet aqua!
 Accipit ille locus posito velamine cunctas
 et vitium nudi corporis omne videt.
 Ut tegat hoc celetque viros, Fortuna Virilis
 praestat, et hoc parvo ture rogata facit.
 Nec pigeat tritum niveo cum lacte papaver
 sumere et expressis mella liquata favis:
 cum primum cupido Venus est deducta marito,
 hoc bibit, ex illo tempore nupta fuit.
 supplicibus verbis illam placate! sub illa
 et forma et mores et bona fama manet.
 Roma pudicitia proavorum tempore lapsa est:
 Cumaeam, veteres, consulistis anum.
 Templi iubet fieri Veneri, quibus ordine factis
 inde Venus verso nomina corde tenet.
 Semper ad Aeneadas placido, pulcherrima, vultu
 respice, totque tuas, diva, tuere nurus!

Duly you worship the goddess, Latin wives, old and young, and you who may not dress like respectable women. Remove the golden necklace from the goddess's marble neck, remove her ornaments: she must be thoroughly bathed. Replace the golden necklace on her neck when it is dry: now you must give her new flowers, new roses. She further demands that you be bathed beneath green myrtle: learn the specific reason for this demand. Naked on the shore she was drying her dripping hair; a randy bunch of satyrs saw the goddess. Noticing them, she covered her body with a screen of myrtle: this kept her safe, so she demands that you repeat the action.

Now learn why you give incense to Manly Fortune, in the place which is damp with warm water. That place admits all women with their clothing removed and sees a naked body's every blemish. Manly Fortune takes care of covering these and hiding them from men, and does so on request for a little incense.

Don't be reluctant to take a dose of poppy crushed in snow-white milk with honey drained from the comb. When her passionate husband first took Venus home, she drank this; from then on she was a wife. Appease her with humble words; under her sway abide beauty, character, and good reputation. Sexual morality at Rome once slipped from ancestral standards; the ancients consulted the old woman of Cumae, which demanded a temple for Venus. When it was duly built, from that Venus got the name "Change of Hearts." Always smile, goddess most fair, on Aeneas's descendants, and safeguard your many daughters-in-law!

The first part of the account (133–44) is perhaps the least useful for the purposes of historical description: the *incipit* distinguishes two cate-

gories of women, “matrons and daughters-in-law,” on the one hand, and ladies of pleasure (indicated by the absence of certain characteristic garments, headbands and long skirts) on the other (133 ff.). This distinction is to be fully expected on the basis of the parallel sources. Even in the shared activities of Venus’s day, differences in the cult would have inevitably maintained a division between two such socially distinct categories. On the calends of April, Johannes Lydus informs us, respectable women prayed Venus to grant them harmony in marriage and virtuous conduct, while the “others” put on myrtle crowns and went to wash themselves in the men’s baths.

Certainly, all this material is also present in Ovid, but we must honestly say that the poet does a great deal to cancel the dividing line. The initial apostrophe lumps together *matres* and prostitutes rather than distinguishing one group from the other. The ritual instructions for the washing of Venus are addressed to a category which, as it is not more accurately specified, we are led to think applies to all women, those same ones who are to undress and wash themselves in imitation of Venus (139); and the poet advises all of them (147, *cunctas*) to strip naked in the public baths. By taking the part of a master of ceremonies, the poet gives not only explanations but also practical instructions (if Roman ladies were to take this “April fool” seriously, there would be serious problems of public order in the town!). In the lines that follow, the dominating theme is apparently that of marriage, and the prostitutes seem to have been forgotten (it is we who see the distinction, in line with the articulated view dictated by our parallel sources), for the poet goes on to speak of Venus “Verticordia” and the benefits she gives (156: beauty, morality, and reputation). We shall soon see that some confusion has crept in here too. Let us trace an initial balance: the poet has worked on the creation of general common outlines that may content a religious historian: the important thing to understand is that the festive day is organized around a single “field” of cultural signifieds.¹⁰ But no religious historian could follow Ovid’s argument to its logical conclusion and believe that the calends of April could have the effect of removing such a wide social barrier, making respectable married women mingle with ladies of pleasure in shared ritual observances and religious meanings.

10. The position of the festival at 1 April is clearly analogous to the women’s festival for Juno at 1 March, the *Matronalia*, and no serious religious historian would undertake a discussion of the two festivals without comparing them; calendrical parallelism helps to focus on the functional oppositions and on different ways of imagining women in society.

If we look at Ovid's literary background for this passage, our suspicions only increase. In the opening lines (133–44) the traces of an illustrious model have long been recognized.¹¹ The instructions for the ritual given by the poet's voice (*rite colitis . . . demite . . . demite . . . tota lavanda dea est . . . reddite . . . danda*), the repetitions that accompany the order of the ceremony (e.g. 135, 137; cf. Call. *Hymn.* 5.1–2, 13, 15), the image of the statue to be washed and the women called on to wash it by the poet, the myth to explain the origin and mode of this ritual ablution: all these clues, both formal and thematic, point toward one of Callimachus's hymns, the *Bath of Pallas*.¹² This hymn opens by summoning the women to work:

“Οσσαι λωτροχόοι τῆς Παλλάδος ἔξιτε παῖσαι,
ἔξιτε

Callimachus assigns to the Argive women of his hymn the task of washing Athena's statue (“All of you, women who wash Pallas, come out all of you, come out”) and establishes a mimetic convention by which the poet's voice guides the participants in the ritual, and by this means also describes it. His readers find themselves cast in the role of the listening worshippers. Ovid, who has just dedicated a hymn in the traditional style to Venus (4.91–132), follows this model. His first variation on it is that the *Fasti* responds to a song for a festival of Athena with a song for a festival of Venus.

But these two goddesses can only be brought together by a process of contrasts. Callimachus is very clear on this point: Pallas does not want costly oils or perfumes, or even mirrors—she rejects all these because *she is not like Venus* (15 ff.). In the next part of the hymn, another type of prohibition will emerge as a focal point: Pallas must not be seen naked. The washing of her statue is a risky moment: “do not bathe today,” do not go to the river, is the clear warning that the poet–master of ceremonies gives to the devout Argive women: *μὴ βάπτετε*.

This is the precise hinge on which Ovid makes his Callimachean allusion turn round. The order “do not wash, keep away from the river” is reversed to its complete opposite: *vos quoque sub viridi myrto iubet ipsa lavari* (*Fasti* 4.139). Venus invites her followers to a collective bathe, scantily protected by the myrtle, and the goddess herself must be divested of all her ornaments and washed from head to foot (4.135 ff.). The nakedness that lies at the center of this celebration is no taboo; it is a public

11. Especially helpful has been Floratos 1960, on the *Veneralia*.

12. The fifth hymn is, like Ovid's *Fasti*, an elegiac composition.

gesture. This will remind readers of Callimachus's fifth hymn of a fearful precedent, for the narrative body of the poem is given over to the story of Tiresias who, through no fault of his own, saw Pallas bathing naked and was punished by being cruelly blinded. The young Tiresias goes to the fountain and sees what even the poet himself cannot tell us (5.78). Tiresias's cruel punishment warns Callimachus's audience not to contaminate the goddess's ritual bath with their mortal sight.

Ovid too has a myth to narrate: it is in fact a real *aition* for the ritual that he represents (4.140: *causaque, cur iubeat, discite, certa subest*). The masculine protagonists of this story are very different from the innocent Tiresias: the satyrs, with the curiosity bred of lust, spied on Aphrodite who was naked after her bath, and the goddess . . . did not punish anybody at this point, because all she did was cover herself with some myrtle. Her nakedness, which is after all visible to all lovers of Greek plastic art, is certainly not "unmentionable" like that of Athena. The significance of the covering of myrtle is in keeping with this atmosphere of license. The symbolic values of the myrtle have already been sanctified in the proem to this book:¹³ it is the plant of elegy and of eros, and a crown of myrtle only gives more evidence to the projection of masculine desire onto Venus's nakedness. For this is just what Venus orders her devotees to do: they are to bathe naked, wearing a myrtle crown. His mention of this (indecent) covering seems to be connected with a specific piece of mischief on Ovid's part. In the parallel version of this myth handed down by Servius (ad Verg. *Ecl.* 7.62), Venus *latuit in myrto ne nuda conspiceretur*: it was a whole bush, one is given to understand, that hid the naked Venus from the satyrs lurking on that beach. Taking over the Callimachean role of master of ceremonies, Ovid has composed a type of hymn where the theme of prohibition central to the *Bath of Pallas* has been turned upside down.

This observation can be linked with the confusion of social roles already noted in the festival as Ovid represents it. It was not hard to see how "Venus's bath" tends to become confused with the rite for *Fortuna Virilis*, and how the women's shared participation breaks down the distinction between matrons and ladies of pleasure. We can now be certain that these moves (the transformation of Callimachus and the ritual instructions) are both complementary and tendentious. The women of Rome, all of them, must undress Venus and wash her, must undress and wash themselves, and must celebrate a festival in the public baths. These

13. Compare the analysis above, part II, chapter 1.

women, of all kinds, must supplicate Venus to preserve their beauty, good behavior, and reputation (4.155 ff.), and they must worship *Fortuna Virilis* so that their physical defects will pass unnoticed and not make them less desirable (4.147–50). Our chances of reconstructing the original form of this festival depend on how far we are able to remove the deformations that the story and its Ovidian context have brought about in it. Scholars of Roman history, at least, will inevitably reason in this way. But nothing is gained by thinking of these interventions on the poet's part in terms of misunderstandings: all the clues that we have collected point toward a coherent rewriting or recreation of 1 April, directed toward a single purpose. Callimachus's learned poetry and the data regarding the Roman cult have been consciously and consistently manipulated, and the result deserves to be read as the testimonial of an observer from the Augustan age. The only problem is that this observer is far from unbiased and is not interested in giving a philological reconstruction of the cult's tradition. Ovid's original readers were in a perfect position to appreciate this initiative on the narrator's part, because, unlike us, they already had their own direct and routine experience of the calends of April in Rome. It is obvious, but it may be helpful for us to remember that Callimachus was writing for readers who had had few if any occasions to celebrate Athena's festival in Argolis.

Ovid then goes on to recommend a special potion, made of milk, honey, and ground poppy seed, to Venus's devotees: the goddess too is said to have used it, on her wedding night. Here Venus is without any doubt a matrimonial divinity, connected with the success of marriages, and we must try and forget the prostitutes' Venus. But the mythological allusion insinuates some contrasting elements into the picture. *Cum primum cupido Venus est deducta marito* (153) is the language of an epithalamium, but everyone knows (especially Ovid's readers) that the goddess did not make a successful marriage. Her bridegroom was extremely unattractive: perhaps the poppy seed is meant to produce oblivion on the wedding night? Mars made protracted raids on the couple's marriage bed. And this is the goddess who must protect her daughters-in-law, the descendants of her son Aeneas: *ad Aeneadas . . . respice totque tuas . . . tuere nurus* (161–62). As Venus is an ancestor not only of the Roman people in general but also of the Augustan family in particular, a malicious commentator sees a carefully aimed double meaning here:¹⁴ there are always plenty of young women in Augustus's household who could

14. Porte 1985a, 393.

do with Venus's protective influence on their virtue and the sacred bond of marriage.

Deductions of this kind are by their very nature unprovable. But there is no malice in saying that *Aeneadas* refers to the Romans as a whole; *totque tuas . . . nurus*, with that *tot* well in evidence, makes it clear that we are to think of a collective group, and Lucretius's illustrious model (1.1, *Aeneadum genetrix*) is a further confirmation of this. The logic is unexceptionable, as long as one chooses to forget that Venus's connection with the sons of Aeneas is the result of a new adulterous relationship (with Anchises this time, and not with Mars), at the expense of that marriage of hers that Ovid had recalled only a few lines earlier. Descended from an illicit love affair of Venus's, the Roman women must invoke her as the protectress of their own honor.

Ovid has directed the agenda of 1 April toward a third level of celebrations: after the bath of Venus and the cult of *Fortuna Virilis*, we shall now be told about a third aspect of Venus, which is still however connected with her sexuality. Everyone knows that there is a tendency for modesty to be abandoned, and that in ancient times moral standards were higher. But according to Ovid this crisis dates back to a long time ago, much longer than most people imagine: *Roma pudicitia proavorum tempore lapsa est* (4.157). As other sources tell us, the gods gave a precise warning: a girl (although she had nothing to do with the criminal facts) was struck by lightning together with her horse, and the intention of this thunderbolt was to denounce a squalid story of sex involving Vestal virgins and Roman cavalymen. The cult of *Venus Verticordia* was proposed in order to solve this problem, and a temple was built for the purpose. Valerius Maximus has very clear ideas about the cult of this particular Venus: it was promoted *quo facilius virginum mulierumque mens a libidine ad pudicitiam converteretur* (8.15.12). Danielle Porte sees a historically precise parallel between Valerius and Ovid: "Given that Valerius Maximus is, just as Ovid is, a Julio-Claudian courtier, there is no doubt that both the texts present us with a Venus who conforms to the ideals of the moment."¹⁵ "Ovid and his readers are part of the—uniform—Augustan culture . . . therefore there is no doubt that . . ."—we have already learned not to put too much trust in this interpretative pattern. If one reads the text with a mind free from preconceived ideas, the explanation that Ovid gives of *Verticordia* is not the same as Valerius's: *inde Venus verso nomina corde tenet* (4.160). In good Latin that

15. Porte 1985a, 391.

does not mean "Venus was called Verticordia with the purpose of changing the hearts of the Roman women" (Valerius Maximus), but rather "Venus was called Verticordia because their hearts had changed." One receives the impression, in short, that the breakdown in female modesty is no longer reversible, at least not through the cult of Venus.

The irony is sharper for the very fact that this is an aetiological point of view. It is not a question here of the moralizing campaigns that characterize Augustan politics, but of a much older battle, fought out *proavorum tempore* when Rome was faced by a very early crisis in sexual behavior. If the battle took place so long ago, so did the breakdown: the cult of *Venus Verticordia* contains a double contradiction, first because it backdates the corruption of sexual *mores* to that past age in which Roman moralists are in the habit of seeing an ideal image of the city's capacities for recovery; and second because it notes the change instead of correcting it. The calendar date of 1 April, with its various traditions, suggests that the prospects of effecting an operation of moralization on Rome, starting with the sexual behavior of her citizens, are extremely doubtful.

In the text of the poem, this section is immediately followed by a zodiacal note that belongs to the following day. The reader may think of a definite change of scene, dictated by the vertical dimension of astronomical time. But we have already dedicated a chapter (part II, chapter 2) to the idea that influences can spread by contagion from one paragraph to another, and I would not like this principle of "syntagmatic effects" to disappear from our critical toolbox. The second of April, then, requires Ovid to talk about the Pleiades and their morning rising. This constellation, as poets know, corresponds to seven famous sisters, but only six are visible. Ovid explains the reason for this: six of them display themselves openly, proud of having been to bed with gods (4.171, *in amplexum . . . venere deorum*), while the seventh, poor thing, is ashamed and hides herself from sight because she *married* a not particularly commendable mortal (4.175–76): *septima mortali tibi, Sisyphæ, nupsit: / paenitet et facti sola pudore latet*.

Meropæ's shame degrades her own lawful marriage to the level of a sin, and shows her envy for the other Pleiades' one-night stands: this is a clinching epilogue for a day that has staged the ambiguities of marriage and the difficulties of repressing female sexuality.

I believe that the operations of Augustan discourse with regard to the private sphere, that of sexuality and marriage, are implied in all the fabric that we have analyzed. Whatever one may think about Ovid's other

works (the relationship between *Ars amatoria* and Augustan moral legislation continues to be a classic case in the debate), it is clear that this time Ovid is using an indirect strategy: the whole interest of the *Fasti* is oriented toward the causes, and the present is only mentioned insofar as it reflects them. But it is just this “long way round” of aetiology that causes a violent rebound onto ideological territory. The past that is to be reconstructed as a cause is also, according to the ideology of restoration, a model to aspire to. The traditionalism and moralism, typical of a large part of the collective mentality, has been rendered systematic and compulsory by Augustus. I would say that the aetiology should also offer an edifying message of its own. It is not enough to go back to the origins of the rite, the cult, or the sacred place; these causes in narrative form must be made to give an added meaning and to uphold the values of the religious *explanandum*.

THE VEIL

While we are on the subject of defending modesty, the sixth book of the poem offers us another example. Ovid is telling us about a murky episode that goes back to the period of the kings of Rome, and his narrative explains why there is a veil over the head of King Servius Tullius's statue in the temple of Fortune. This, the poet argues, is a portentous reaction against the disgraceful behavior of Tullia: so as not to see the hated face of his daughter, the virtuous king asks to be deprived of the power of sight (6.615–16), with the result that even today, strangely enough, his statue is blinded by drapery. Immediately afterwards we learn that the goddess Fortuna has told the Romans to consider this veil as a symbol of shamefacedness: “The first day that Servius can be seen with his face uncovered will be the first day of shamelessness” for the whole of Rome. Servius's statue, so it seems, carries a great weight of responsibility: in spite of the Lady Macbeth-type atmosphere of the story of Tullia, Ovid concentrates his treatment of the defence of shamefacedness on sexual morality, and in the line that follows Fortuna's revelation (6.621) he solemnly warns the Roman matrons not to touch the forbidden drapery covering Servius. Evidently the matrons might have a certain interest in unveiling the statue, thus putting an end to the reign of modesty. At this point the reader will remember with some surprise that Ovid has already given alternative explanations of the *aition* of the veiled statue, even though there he placed most of the emphasis on the story of the wicked Tullia. One of these rival explanations, the first in chronological order

(6.573–78), involves a story of clandestine love affairs that could make good material for a mime show. Who is there under the veiled statue? Servius, that much is certain, but the reason why is far from certain, and the poet cannot make up his mind (6.571–72). The first explanation he gives is that Servius and Fortuna were secret lovers: the goddess used to climb through a little window into the king's house by night, because she did not want anyone to know about her love affair with a mortal. Now that the affair is over Fortuna is ashamed of it (579, *nunc pudet*) and keeps the face of the king she once loved hidden under a veil.

This is an odd way of defending shamefacedness: in the story of Tullia, the king defended his own eyes from being contaminated by an abominable sight, but in this case it is he himself, on the contrary, whose sight is an outrage to modesty. The veil that Fortuna has forced him to wear protects the modesty of observers and forbids that the shameful affair should be remembered, while at the same time it makes it publicly visible: if Ovid's first explanation is accepted, no one can look at the statue that the veil has made unrecognizable without recognizing that that veil is there to cover up a scandal that has been canceled out. The function of the veil is no less ambiguous than that of the goddess's shamefacedness, which protects her from dishonor but also protects this dishonor from being seen. If the two causes that have been narrated are put side by side, there is a complete stalemate: the figure of Servius oscillates between the roles of arbiter of morality and representative of transgression, and the veil over the statue is at the same time the guarantee of future morality and the reminder of a past infraction. Ambiguities and tensions make up an essential part of any mythology, but the object of our discussion is something rather different. The question we are asking is whether this language of polarization and indecision is the most suitable one for explaining "the ideals of the moment" that ought to be dear to a "Julio-Claudian courtier." If the messages of the aetiology have no useful function for the purposes of moralizing, all this laborious work of recuperating ancient causes comes down to a display of problematic signifiers that are in discordance with the programs of moral restoration.

THE GOLDEN AGE IS NOW

The poem's insistence on the difficulties of going back to the past and the discontinuity between this and the present can be read as a reflection of certain difficulties in Augustan discourse. And the efforts required to extricate messages of edifying values and moral restoration from their

obstinately ambiguous contexts in the poem seem to be a warning to certain readers against trying to impose a preestablished program on their reading of it. There is a way out for those who decide to believe that certain themes of discussion, such as private morals, sexual behavior, and the attitude toward money, are in some way "neutral" in the context of Augustan discourse, that they are merely themes for diatribe, connected with a conventional expressive register that may also be frivolous. What counts, in short, is what the poet says about Augustus: the rest does not involve any serious responsibility on Ovid's part. My objection to this is that it is not so easy to make light of the theme of *mores*. The issue of "morals" had always been of vital interest throughout the development of republican culture. Augustus's policy with regard to such phenomena as conspicuous consumption, the family, and the use of pleasures is an important part of an overall political strategy, and it involves the individual participation of Rome's citizens. None of the work of Horace's "maturity," for example, can be properly understood without a knowledge of this current of thought.

Perhaps I can give a clear picture of the *Fasti*'s position in this context by analyzing a particular episode, the important speech (1.101 ff.) in which Janus inaugurates the poem and takes part in its first session of question and answer.

The choice of Janus as the first informant, almost as a divine prologue to this antiquarian script, is highly suggestive, and the motives for this choice arouse strong expectations in the reader. Janus is a god of absolute and unsurpassable antiquity, for he tells Ovid that once he actually was Chaos (1.103). He is therefore an ideal informant for a poem that sets out to cover *longi temporis acta* (1.104). And he is a Roman god without a Greek equivalent (1.90), highly suitable for introducing a poem of Roman antiquities.¹⁶ Janus is the god of beginnings, of openings, and of entrances, and in fact we are at the beginning of a poem. He is the first god to be invoked in prayers, and, among other things, the *Fasti* will also be a review of gods and liturgies. He is the god from which the year takes its start (1.65, *anni tacite labentis origo*), and thus a super-*aition* for a poem of "origins" that are strung along the progressive stages of the year. He is, naturally, the patron divinity who gives his name to the

16. Like many divine revelations in the *Fasti*, this one has a surprising consequence: Chaos may not be counted as a god (1.103) but it is far from clear that it could be perceived as a quintessentially Roman entity; as in the discussion of Terminus, Ovid questions all possible ideals of a pure and uncorrupted *Romanitas*, free from foreign influence.

month of January; and he presides over the first day of the year, the *kalendae Ianuariae* when the new consuls take up office, those men by whom one year is distinguished from another in the public memory and whose names seal the official *Fasti*, on which this poem is a literary variation. Janus is a god of war and peace—with a clear preference for peace (1.253, *nil mihi cum bello*), which places him on the same wavelength as the “unarmed” poet Ovid.¹⁷ He is a two-formed, binary god, and his dualism (which brought him to Freud’s attention, and desk, from 1899 on) can invite us to see the *Fasti* too as in some way a poem “with two voices.”¹⁸ A fascinating correspondence can be seen between his double nature and the duality that is part of the elegiac couplet, with its alternation of longer and shorter lines.¹⁹ In short, in Janus the *Fasti* has found its ideal doorkeeper, and in the course of a long interview with him (1.95–288) the poem’s readers will be taught to listen for a programmatic tone in his voice, and not just for factual answers to antiquarian queries and problems.

This fabric of motivations is further reinforced by the use of literary allusions. Janus appears to Ovid while he is musing over his *tabellae*, his writing materials, which are already in his hands (1.93): this type of epiphany, so literary and professional, comes from a famous scene in Callimachus. In the programmatic prologue to the *Aetia*, Apollo had appeared to the young Callimachus, who was also armed with his “tablets” (δέλτων fr.1.21 Pf.). Apollo gives Callimachus poetical instructions, while Ovid’s Janus is less explicit, presenting himself more as an informant than as a source of aesthetic inspiration, but the allusion still has a power of its own and acts as a bridge between the opening scene of the *Fasti* and the prologue of Ovid’s main model in Greek poetry:²⁰ thus we are also led to see a connection between Janus and the literary program of the new poem. Nearly two hundred lines later, in his farewell to Janus, the poet asks for his protection (1.288, *neve suum praesta deserat auctor opus*), and the context seems to suggest that the god’s favor is to accompany Germanicus, the guarantor of universal peace in his victories over the barbarians. However, the juxtaposition between *auctor* and *opus suum* is also suggestive, for it reminds us that Ovid too, if he is to be

17. See part I and part II, chapter 1.

18. Hardie 1991, 64, ends an important discussion of the episode by suggesting that Janus could license a sort of “bifocal reading” of the poem.

19. The implication is suggested in Barchiesi 1991, 16–17.

20. The parallel was first noted by de Cola 1937, 87; see the comments in Miller 1982, 410; Miller 1983, 161; Harries 1989, 169 n. 25; Hardie 1991, 59.

auctor of an *opus* that will not fail (and in the end, in fact, the poem will remain unfinished), is in need of the close cooperation of this particular god.

All these factors invite us to pay very close attention to Janus's functionality as an informant too. We have already mentioned that he is a valuable witness: he had started off as Chaos, a formless and indistinct mass (1.111), before taking on the precise form of a god. His two faces are a small (!) remainder (1.113, *confusae quondam nota parva figurae*) of his originally universal nature. We are inclined to think that a god of beginnings and of Universal Chaos ought to be an absolutely accurate commentator.

Whenever anything happened, he was there, on the spot. So, to the poet's first question—"why have you got two faces?"—*two* perfectly satisfactory answers are given: "because once I was chaos" (1.103 ff.), but also "because with two faces I can be the guardian of the whole world" (1.115, *quae causa sit altera formae* . . .). Here is the first of the many causes that make up the poem, and it is already immediately flanked by a *causa altera*. With his two faces, his two mouths, and his two voices, Janus is a speaking example of how the aetiological method of the *Fasti* will work, in search of continually bifurcating truths that are generally at least double, hardly ever single.

But there is also another programmatic function in Janus's origins in primeval chaos. Thanks to this genealogy, Ovid's poem can start off with Chaos, and this is very convenient for anyone who wants to trace the literary genealogy of the *Fasti* from this point. Callimachus had introduced his poem on the Causes by recalling the initiation of a great predecessor, Hesiod, to whom the Muses had revealed long histories beginning with the "birth of Chaos," *Χάος γένεσθω* (fr. 2.3 Pf.). Thus the *Aetia* begins by remembering, and in part refashioning, the opening of the *Theogony*, the poem that contains the universal history of the gods in their genealogy which goes back to Chaos.²¹ Callimachus seems to be telling us that for him Chaos is the "primary" *aition*, the origin of everything and also the origin of his own aetiological poem. The Alexandrian poet is clearly exploiting both the similarities and also the differences between his own new work and Hesiod's older model. And Ovid is strongly influenced by this opening technique. The first divinity in the *Fasti* recalls that he was born as Chaos, but those who have also read the

21. *Theog.* 116, "The beginning was Chaos . . .," are the first words in the Hesiodic tale, after the long proemium narrating the encounter with the Muses.

Metamorphoses will remember that there too their reading opened with a cosmogony: the poet starts off with the confusion of chaos, when there was not yet any sea, earth, or sky (*Met.* 1.5 ff.: *ante* is the first word of the long history), nor were there even any fixed forms, and therefore there could not be any metamorphosis. This reference to the genealogy used by Callimachus and Hesiod is a common bond, and it creates a precise parallel between the two great poems of Ovid's maturity, the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*.²²

If we keep the central role of this Hesiodic and Callimachean model in mind, new implications come to light. The first word Janus utters is *disce* (1.101), and no more pertinent exordium could be wished for. The poet sums up in one word the didactic nature of his text. In the same opening line, the god addresses his disciple as *vates operose dierum*, a very apt designation for a writer who is following in the footsteps of the didactic poem entitled *Works and Days*, *vates OPERose DIERUM*. Author of a didactic poem dedicated to the days, Ovid reminds us of the first classic work in this genre, a text that opens the way to didactic poetry, and, more concretely, anticipates the calendar theme which in the *Fasti* becomes the poem's specific framework. The *Fasti* talks about "days" without "works": that is, about holidays.²³

Hesiod's name also brings to mind a serious and socially responsible kind of poetry, whose themes—the myth of the Ages, the relationship between man and riches, the exercise of justice—are not easily associated with Ovid and his work. Nevertheless, these arguments also allow parallels to be drawn between Ovid's Janus and Hesiod. If on the one hand the god's identification with Chaos steers him in the direction of the cosmogonical revelations of the *Theogony*, on the other hand his interest in moral themes qualifies him as a continuer of the *Works and Days*. Here too the introductory "dream" of Callimachus's *Aetia* can act as an intermediary. According to Callimachus, the Muses of Helicon had revealed to Hesiod the contents not only of his *Theogony* but also of his *Works*. There are a number of gaps in the text, but this particular connection (which is quite arbitrary when compared with Hesiod's original statements) seems to have been made: after speaking of the Hippocrene fountain and of Chaos (that is, the place where Hesiod was instructed by the Muses and the first subject of his song on the genealogy of the

22. On other parallelisms between the scripts of the two poems compare Hinds 1987b, 42–43; Barchiesi 1991, 6.

23. Note also Hardie 1991, 59.

gods), Callimachus (fr. 2.5 Pf.) gave an almost literal quotation of a line from the central part of the *Works* (265, "the man who prepares evil for others prepares evils for himself"). Only a few isolated words, such as "live" and "do," remain of Callimachus's following lines, so there is very little to build on, but the general impression is given that the poet intended to reproduce the sententious moral tone that characterizes the *Erga*, the work that Hesiod had turned to after the revelation of the *Theogony*. In such a context Callimachus may also have referred to the myth of the Ages.²⁴

If in Hesiod's case (or rather in the case of the original Hesiod plus that of Callimachus) these themes were the fruit of his encounter with the Muses, Ovid can certainly gain as much from his encounter with Janus. The god has been present in the Roman world ever since the cosmos began, and he has firsthand knowledge on the subject of the contrasts between the various Ages of mankind. He is able to give the narrator an account of the present (1.191, "*O quam te fallunt tua saecula*" dixit) and to compare it with the remotest past (1.103, "*Nam sum res prisca*"). When the god tells us about the past's love of justice (1.247 ff.) and the present's greed for riches (1.191–225), we are prepared to believe him. His competence surpasses even that of Hesiod's Muses²⁵ and his voice sounds like that of a super-Hesiod, who combines a moral purpose with firsthand experience, since he has lived both in the age of Saturn and in the decadent world of the present.

All this leads the reader to the confident expectation that Janus will be on the side of the past. For generations (during that interminable period that we are in the habit of calling "the Augustan age") writers had cultivated nostalgic sentiments and made appeals for a return to the origins. Now at last the god of origins stands up to speak. Effectively enough, Janus inherits from Hesiod that pessimistic frame of thought according to which the gods have progressively distanced themselves from the earth, and justice has given way to greed. There are also more

24. This is Lobel's idea; cf. Pfeiffer's apparatus ad fr. 2.6. A reference to the myth of the Ages would be appropriate, while Callimachus is recalling the important revelations which Hesiod owed to the Muses, and would balance the narration of the origins of gods in the *Theogony*. In *Fasti* 6.13–14 Ovid intentionally merges the two Hesiodic creations: the main reference is to the encounter with the Muses in the *Theogony* proemium, and to the way Callimachus appropriated this encounter into his own encounter with the Muses (frs. 2.1, 112.5 Pf.); but Hesiod is labeled *praeceptor arandi*, that is, author of a didactic poem on agriculture. My observations now agree with Miller 1992, 38–40.

25. On a possible limit of their universal knowledge see above, p. 185.

concrete touches, where a sentence like *dat census honores, / census amicitias: pauper ubique iacet* (1.217–18) gives a picture of contemporary society as an authentic plutocracy. But there is also a net contrast with Hesiod. The Greek poet lamented that he was condemned to live in the worst age of all (*Works* 176, “the present, in fact, is the Iron Age”), but Janus, even if he has witnessed the corruption of moral standards, is much less tied to the past. It is true that gold has replaced bronze, and the new currency has ousted the old, but the gods too are attracted by gold, by temples full of gold: we speak well of what is antique, we praise past times, but we like the present much better (1.221–25). In short, “gold” has changed its place in the sequence of the Ages, but it has not brought a moral renaissance with it. The present is both golden and wicked, affluent and unjust. A reminder of the importance of these arguments is hardly necessary: we are at the beginning of a work which is largely preoccupied with comparing the origins with the present, antique Rome with Augustan Rome, and the interpretative key that we are being offered is in surprising contrast with the traditional moralism that conventionally exalts the past.

We could even go so far as to call the present a “Golden Age,” as Ovid does so boldly in the *Ars amatoria*: “This is really the Golden Age, with gold the highest honors are bought” (2.277 ff.); “rude simplicity is a thing of the past, today Rome is golden . . .” (3.121 ff.). It has been rightly noted that the complacent statement, “I am happy to have been born in these days” sounds like a striking correction of a classic Hesiodic motto, “If only heaven had willed that I could avoid living among the humans of the fifth generation: I wish I had died before, I wish I was born later” (*Works* 174–75).²⁶

At this point my road takes a different direction from that of those who think that Ovid’s purpose in overturning Hesiod’s primitivism is to express his enthusiasm for a new Golden Age that has been abundantly restored by Augustus, a modernistic attitude that is bound up with a new and subtler form of Augustan conformism. This conclusion is unacceptable in the light of a closer observation of the highly complex cultural models called up by the didactic poet of the *Ars* and by the Janus of the *Fasti*. The poet’s approval of the present and his interest in the myth of the Ages sound very well within the frame of Augustan ideology, but there is a striking omission, which is so fundamental that many interpre-

26. La Penna 1979, 195.

ters do not even mention it.²⁷ Ovid has not a word to say about the most important political myth of the early Augustan age, that of the Return. The poet evokes the Golden Age as a remote period of primitive simplicity, or he paints the affluence (civil but also plutocratic) of the present in golden hues, but he does not hint at any possible passage between them. Janus, as we have seen, should know about this, but for him the Age of Justice died with Saturn, and the present is only golden in that it is wealthy and advanced. Besides, Janus is sharp enough to note that the passion for lucre already existed in Saturn's time: there were just fewer things to desire (1.193 ff.). Janus's recuperation of the past shows a pattern of development that is familiar in the critical historiography of late republican Rome: the city becomes ever richer and more civilized, and at the same time it is ever more consumed with *amor habendi* and *opum furiosa cupido* (1.195, 211).

The poet of the *Fasti* omits all reference to a return to the purity of the origins, and he also qualifies this purity. The myth of the Return was central not only to the *Aeneid*, but also to the iconographic and symbolic programs of celebratory art,²⁸ and it was accompanied, especially in Horace, by a vigorous campaign against moral degeneration and the consumption of luxury goods. Ovid cancels out this moral tension, and anyone who considers that he is merely making a variation on the theme should remember that without the struggle for moral regeneration Augustus's role loses significance, and the idea that immoral behavior is a sin against the prince—an idea that is certainly not of secondary importance to Augustus and Augustan politics—is abruptly deprived of its main premise.

Rome is now a city of gold, but only for the splendor of her monuments and the political and social power of finance, and it was not this that the Return myth proposed as its visionary goal. With easy versatility

27. I have been helped to focus on this point by Wallace-Hadrill 1982: he shows the strong link connecting myth of the Ages, myth of Return, and the function of purification appropriated by the prince. The Return of Golden Age requires a crusade against sin guided by the prince, and this enables a political leadership to approach deviant behavior by assimilating it to political opposition. Wallace-Hadrill convincingly notes that the issue of moral regeneration is a generalizing successor to an issue that had been central to Octavian's propaganda: the idea that the prince is the one who heals the guilt and the original sin of civil war by leading the Romans toward collective expiation.

28. Zanker 1989 is now fundamental. For Virgil, note the different references at *Aen.* 6.792 ff. and 8.319 ff. Janus, who is even older than Saturnus, could offer a glowing confirmation of the Virgilian parallelism between primeval Latium and the triumph of Augustan order, between Saturnian and imperial peace. His failure to go full circle cannot be just a random variation or a harmless *capriccio*.

Ovid takes over the elements of Horatian polemic—its gold mines, seas churned up by magnificent craft, marriages in crisis, oriental luxury, greed bloated like dropsy²⁹—but at the same time he abolishes its commitment to higher ideals, and suggests an acceptance of the present that makes the utopia of the Return seem a hypocritical fantasy. Janus soberly measures the distance between the model set by the origins and the society of the present: he pays homage to its splendors and conquests, but rejects the myths of continuity and recuperation. Many themes belonging to Augustan propaganda are still present, but they no longer seem to be in mutual agreement: such components as aggressive moralism and hopes of the new Age, legislative battles and nostalgia for a primitive communism, begin to appear discordant, if not actually incompatible. Janus's authority acts as guarantee for a contradictory truth, which brings disorder into the habitual modes of Augustan discourse. His version of the Ages of Rome deserves to be listened to, no less than the official truth that was proclaimed a few years earlier by the text that bears the ambitious title of Song of the Ages, *Carmen Saeculare*.³⁰ After our findings about the authority of the gods as informants, we may be uncertain whether to believe Janus, but in my opinion he is more trustworthy than such informants usually are, not only because he has one eye on the past and one on the future but above all because he is the only god who has two mouths to speak with.

29. There is an effect of intertextual dialogue when Ovid lines his moral discussions with systematic reminiscences from Horace: at A.A. 3.123 ff. Ovid remarks that he likes modern times because archaic roughness has gone, not because of gold miners (Hor. *Carm.* 2.2.1 ff., 3.3.49 ff.) or of building activities that disrupt the marine environment (Hor. *Carm.* 3.1.32 ff.). At *Fasti* 1.215–16 the greed for wealth is represented as dropsy: a nice parallel for Hor. *Carm.* 2.2.13–14. Obviously, we have no Horatian source for the idea that living in the past could be even worse than enduring corruption and pollution now (1.221 ff.). Ovid, through intertextual appropriation, forces a wedge between Horace the Augustan poet who exalts the return to simple origins and Horace the literary critic who advocates modern poetry against reactionary or conservative taste.

30. With his national *vates*' hat on, Horace had sung, in the *Carmen Saeculare* (57–60), the return of Plenty—*pleno / Copia cornu*—in the company of Fides, Pax, Honos, Pudor, and neglected Virtus. This was the official opening of the new *saeculum* for which Ovid is publishing his *Fasti*; yet Janus, who already knows about all possible *saecula* and is an expert on “returns” and progress, unties the link between commonwealth and moral values, resists the merger of Plenty and Austerity.

The Satyric Element

Many of the aspects that we have examined so far can be described as ways of unsettling or of pricking the bubble of authority, that authoritarian voice that is supposed to make itself heard through the means of poetic celebration. We shall now shift our interest to the opposite pole of the *Fasti*, to areas characterized by a voice that makes no claims to authority and by a dominant note that we could summarily call phallic.

Naturally, as everyone knows, the phallus *is* authority in its own way, but what we are interested in here is only a superficial manifestation of this. As a norm, Roman culture only accepts phallic exhibition if this is mediated through certain channels, many of which share the filtering properties of comedy. The practical effect of this is that the sexual attributes of those who hold the greatest authority, whether patriarchal or political, are not publicly exposed, while the phallus is visible in the case of weak or marginal characters, and also perhaps when it is passed through certain distancing rituals: for instance, as a protective charm hung round children's necks, in the carnival atmosphere of certain festivals, as part of the grotesque costume of certain comic actors, or as an attribute of particular divinities. If we look at Roman literature, we find that only very specific literary genres and institutions tolerate phallic exhibition. It is excluded, with varying degrees of severity, from such productions as tragedy and "regular" comedy, epic, lyric, and even elegy, while it is admitted through different types of mediation in satire, farce (to use a very generic term) and romance (to use an anachronistic term).

In mythology, it is above all the satyrs (and their Latin descendants) who are characterized by phallic exhibition: they are marginal figures, whose transgressive energy is let loose but also controlled by the collective imagination.¹

STRATEGY OF THE FARCE

One aspect of the *Fasti* that never ceases to surprise us is the number of spaces that the poem's structure allots to themes of "sexual comedy."² The most obvious examples can be found in four narrative inserts:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1.393–440 | Priapus assaults the nymph Lotis but is interrupted by the braying of an ass; |
| 2.303–56 | Faunus assaults Omphale but in her place finds Hercules in female clothing; |
| 3.677–96 | Mars thinks he is going to bed with Minerva and in her place finds a comical old woman in disguise; |
| 6.321–44 | Priapus assaults Vesta but is interrupted by the braying of an ass. |

Thus four books out of the six contain a fairly long sexual-comic interlude, and as can be seen even from a brief list like this, there are strong similarities among them, with basic common factors such as disguises, cross-dressing, mistaken identities, frustrated sexual urges, and a rural setting. This makes one think of a precise blueprint, and work done on the cheap, almost mass-produced, like those old B-grade films, where a single setting was used over and over again—a lick of paint on the flats, a bit of gel on the lights, and everything is ready for a "new" story, filmed on a shoestring.

Ovid proceeds systematically but not mechanically. For example, phallic exhibition is an outstanding feature of the stories involving Priapus and Faunus, but it is carefully avoided when the protagonist is Mars, a far more authoritative divinity. Thus even in these comic interludes norms and proportions must be respected. We can also put forward some borderline cases to widen our repertoire. The story of Janus's as-

1. Compare and contrast with my simplified notations the profound analysis of Winkler 1985, 173 ff.

2. The definition of Fantham 1983, 185, the only systematic study of this type of narrative.

sault on the nymph Carna (6.105–28) is an exact parallel to the episodes centered on Priapus and Faunus, except that here, for the only time in the *Fasti*, the male aggressor is successful. One may observe that Janus and Carna (“door” and “hinge”) are made for each other as a couple, and that Janus has a special status in the poem, being its inaugurating god (1.89 ff.): this might have some connection with the privilege that Ovid grants him, in preference to the other predatory males in the poem.³

The repetitive elements in the main scenes have already been studied, but it is worth dwelling on the markers that Ovid uses to accompany and to introduce his excursions into the sexual and comic area: *causa pudenda quidem est . . . iocis non alienus* (Priapus, 1.392 ff.); *traditur antiqui fabula plena ioci* (Faunus, 2.304); *nunc mihi cur cantent superest obscena puella / dicere . . . inde ioci veteres obscenaque dicta canuntur* (Anna and Mars, 3.675 ff.); *non habet ingratos fabula nostra iocos* (Silenus, 3.738); *scaena ioci morem liberioris habet . . . Mater, ades, florum, ludis celebranda iocosis* (apparitions of Flora, 5.183); *est multi fabula parva ioci* (Priapus and Vesta, 6.320); *et canere ad veteres verba iocosa modos* (the flute players at the *Quinquatrus*, 6.692). The use of terms like *ioci*, *iocosus*, *obscenus*, and also *fabula* seems to be reserved for burlesque tales, almost always of a sexual nature. However, among the passages that I have briefly listed there are some that contain references to the theater in particular and to popular entertainment in general (after all, *fabula* means both “narrated story” and “stage script”). In the passages regarding Flora, Anna Perenna, and the flute players, it is not only the tone of the anecdote that Ovid is about to tell that is signaled, but also the relationship between this type of story and stage traditions, and this signaling is effected by a shared language. In short, the poet makes a constant use of metaliterary indicators, which on the one hand signal the traditions he intends to refer to, and on the other (almost as an institutional duty) “keep their distance” from the level of style and content of the surrounding sections. This is particularly clear in the example of Anna Perenna, where it is possible to say that the farcical story about the ill-assorted bedfellows not only explains the origins of the *obscena dicta* sung on the ides of March but also takes the place of (and

3. The story of Lara and Mercurius (2.583–616) is painted in cruel and livid colors, similarly to the typical rape narratives of *Metamorphoses*. The tale of Tarquinius and Lucretia is different again: mingled with Roman politics, it is an unsettling and wavering narrative, with the potential for a tragedy, but disturbed by equivocal and self-deflating accents.

thus in practice identifies itself with) these *dicta*. A little earlier, the narrator told us about the custom of singing and dancing, on the ides, to tunes picked up at the theater (3.535: *illic et cantant, quidquid didicere theatri*), and Ovid too gives us the impression that he is repeating what he has seen at the mime or the farce. These regular markers create a sense of identification between the comic type of story and the theater,⁴ and at the same time suggest the distance that separates this “low” field from the principal level of the poem. The impression that is conveyed, in short, is that the comic element is only admitted by special license, and its presence must be justified case by case, while all the examples of the comic vein are held together by references to the stage.⁵

As it happens, these safety formulae are all the more necessary because the structure of the calendar hardly ever offers a valid motivation. There is no traditionally accepted explanation to justify these stories of Priapus and Faunus as the causes of Roman rituals and festivals. The poet is stretching to the utmost his license as *vates* of the Roman year, and therefore needs continual safeguards: “it is an anecdote,” “now I shall be joking for a while,” “a tiny divertissement.” It is no accident that while a detailed program like the first proem of the *Fasti* offers a complete index of the poem’s contents (days, festivals, constellations, causes of the rites, celebrations of the Augustan house), it does not promise anything of this kind. One may well wonder whether this unforeseen inclusion of the comic element has any effect on the poem’s position in the literary system. As we have seen (part II, chapter 1), the *Fasti*’s dynamic instability between elegy and epic already poses problems to its readers, and the irruption of the satyrs makes the debate even more complex. And we must not underestimate the overall effect of this combination. Bouncing through the poem with the freedom that is their prerogative, the satyrs and fauns are in danger of finding themselves in company that is too elevated for them. As far as we know, Augustus personally enjoyed mime shows and other types of popular entertainment, but this is irrele-

4. Fantham 1983, 190, sees that these introductions are often matched by a sort of final laugh performed by the characters (e.g. 1.438; 2.355, 377; 3.343; 5.691): this functions as a final approval for a successful trick or for the comic effect of the incident. Even in this respect, the comic interludes of the *Fasti* are based on a sort of theatrical code and clearly demarcate their literary space.

5. The following generations of Roman culture will exploit the use of “comic” gods as warrants of a tradition of *licentia*: so Priapus in the *Priapea*, Flora in Martial, and naturally the satyrs (in the eponymous work) and Priapus again in Petronius. Aligned with the Ovidian experiments in the *Fasti*, those authors develop a continuous narrative of a Roman discourse which is alternative to elevated poetry and to its strategies of authority and legitimation.

vant: the point is that Augustan culture did not envisage, in the hierarchy of its literary institutions, a form so open and various that it could combine the prince's Parthian victories with ithyphallic misadventures. Not even certain experiments in elegy made by Propertius and Ovid himself had gone so far. And we can find evidence for a movement in the opposite direction: the religious institution of the triumph included *ioci* and mocking taunts, even scurrilous ones, but the literary form known as the *triumphus*, which develops in the late Augustan and the Tiberian periods, does not appear to have absorbed anything of this "low" inheritance.

THE SATYRS OFFSTAGE

The thread that we have just followed—the use of terms like *fabula* and *ioci* that are well adapted to the description of theatrical manifestations—leads us to an area where analysis becomes difficult. Such elements as disguises and practical jokes, gender swapping and unsuccessful sexual harassment, are comic themes to be found in a wide repertory that is common to various genres of which we have only indirect and fragmentary knowledge, and it is no simple task to draw lines of division or influence between them. Mime, Atellan farce, Italic or Phlyacian farce, mythological comedy, and satyric drama are all vague presences in Augustan culture,⁶ while other types are in full flowering. There is however a reference point, at least a very general one, even for such uninformed readers as we are. If we compare the frustrated sexual assaults that are typical of the *Fasti* with the versions of the same theme presented in the epic *Metamorphoses*, one difference emerges clearly. There is much more cruelty in the sexual violence narrated in the *Metamorphoses*, and the characters who use it are far more authoritative and dangerous. Jove and Apollo appear more frequently than Faunus and Priapus, the heroines are the victims of arbitrary power, and the narration focuses on their sufferings, including the metamorphoses that they undergo either as a prolongation of rape or as an alternative to it. Our comparison with the comic stage helps us to realize what elements are excluded by the *Metamorphoses* but are permitted to filter into the general mixing bowl of the *Fasti*.

6. But see the dense reappraisal in Wiseman 1988 (his rich general bibliography at p. 1 ignores what is probably the most illuminating structural study of Athenian satyr drama, Rossi 1972).

Only a few of the gods who come on stage in the *Fasti* seem to participate in some way in its comic dimension. Hermes is associated with lies and theft, and a merchant addresses a comic prayer to him (5.675 ff.), asking to escape punishment for his fraudulent tricks. It is however the role of Dionysus that principally deserves attention. This god, with his traditional following of satyrs, Silenus, maenads or nymphs, and donkeys, is well in evidence in the poem. I think that these appearances can be seen as a step in the direction of the world of the *kōmōdia*. The story of Priapus and Lotis takes place during a Dionysian feast, Faunus attempts to seduce Omphale during a night of abstinence in preparation for a Bacchic rite, Silenus is a follower of Bacchus, Priapus's assault on Vesta is frustrated by an animal connected not only with Priapus himself but also with Bacchus, satyr peeping-Toms supply the aetiology for a festival of Venus, Bacchus calms the jealous Ariadne in a scene worthy of the comic theater.⁷ It is as if a *kōmos*, a Dionysiac procession, were passing through the comic interludes in the *Fasti*, unifying and signaling them by a code of suspension of seriousness.⁸ I am not saying that any precise models are being imitated, for this would be highly improbable considering the fluid and serial nature of these traditions: all I want to suggest is that Ovid's choice of characters is influenced by a widespread idea of what can count as "comic," because of a connection with the *kōmos*,⁹ or with the dithyramb.

Divinities like Mercury, Flora, Hercules, and Bacchus, or more ductile figures like Faunus/Pan and Anna Perenna, are useful to the poet precisely because they form a link between the Roman pantheon and the Dionysiac, or satyric, dimension, and enable him to effect a fusion that

7. Ariadne utters what she believes to be a monologue—and is authorized as such, being the performance and updating of her classical soliloquy in Catullus 64—but Dionysus is present behind her; overhears, unnoticed; then intervenes to console her and appease her jealousy. All of this is suggestive of a dramaturgical sequence, for example in a mime or pantomime from the contemporary stage. On the debated testimony at Ovid *Trist.* 2.519–20, where we are told that his "poems" have been often "danced" on the stage, see the new analysis in Spoth 1992, 206–14, who rightly states that there is no necessity to see a precise reference to the *Heroides*. Ariadne is a popular figure in the theater, available for different genres; for example, we happen to know about an Ariadne by Pomponius, the Atellane specialist: some sources frame the Atellane as a kind of Roman response to the Greek tradition of satyric poetry (see Porphyrio on Hor. *A.P.* 221).

8. Littlewood 1980, 318–19, notes some of these convergences; see also Fantham 1983, 187.

9. The alternative learned etymology widely accepted in Rome, comedy from *kōmē*, "village," may be active too; all the comical interludes discussed above have a country setting and show some affinity with the agrarian origins of comic literature in Greece and Italy—that is, with representations of those origins cultivated by the Alexandrians and the Roman elite.

is not envisaged by the official religion. There would be no room for *Bacchanalia*, festivals of Priapus, and such in the official register of public anniversaries, but the poet manages to recuperate these themes by his use of exegetical operations, which function as subjective implantations within the structure of the ordinary calendars. These comic stories involve a constant two-way traffic between Greece and Rome, because they take us back to settings outside Italy, as when the Roman god Faunus creates havoc in a camp in Asia Minor. But Ovid has even got an answer ready—an aetiological one—to account for this confusion of frontiers: it was Evander, the Greek exile who is an important figure in Rome's prehistory, who brought the *silvestria numina* with him: Pan and the satyrs traveled on his ship to invade the Roman world. In this aspect too the good Evander is a smaller-scale alternative to Aeneas,¹⁰ having introduced these rustic and licentious beings into Latium, beings very different from the severe Trojan Penates that Aeneas placed at the foundations of the official state religion—and of national epic.

The importance of the *kōmos* in the fabric of the *Fasti* can be seen as a reply to the centrality of the emperor in the religious reforms. At the very time when Augustus is establishing his monopoly over the central cults of the state, and consequently creating a distinction (at least an implicit one) between festivals of political interest and “minor” festivals, the poet rediscovers this comic dimension, connected with figures and cults that have no political function, or that at least cannot easily be absorbed into the system.

There are two things that we need to understand better: what type of comic culture is Ovid referring to, and what intermediary strategies is he suggesting to his readers to enable them to give full play to the effects of this element in the context of the poem? As regards the first point, a number of clues point to a literary genre that we know very little about and, above all, cannot be sure existed in Rome: that is, the satyric drama. We can mention the striking similarities between the “playful” stories of the *Fasti* and the main features that we know of the Attic satyric drama:¹¹ the open-air setting in fields or woods, the systematic use of Silenus and satyrs as members of the chorus, the contrast between mythological plot and grotesque action, the aggressive and regularly frustrated sexual advances, the sexual misunderstandings and mistaken identities, and the

10. On Evander as the counterpart to Aeneas, see Fantham 1992b.

11. The comparison can only be hypothetical, and the genre had an intense evolution in Hellenistic culture, still very mysterious to us.

phallic costumes. Hermes the rascal and Hercules the womanizer are two of the characters for whom we have the best evidence as actors on the satyric stage, and they have an important role in Ovid. But a final resemblance deserves particular emphasis, the element of parody, which dares to mock the highest levels of the arts. In the case of the satyric drama, that “playful tragedy,”¹² the poetic style makes continual attacks on the tragic model, for the parody of tragedy is fundamental to the genre. Similar intentions can be seen in Ovid. Ariadne’s monologue when she is deceived by Bacchus (3.459–516) is a light, theatrical rewriting of a lofty Catullan text.¹³ Ovid’s Anna, the sister of Virgil’s Dido, ends an episode of vulgar jealousy in Aeneas’s house by throwing herself, scantily clothed, out of a “low window” (*humili . . . fenestra*, 3.643): this detail reminds us of the abrupt conclusions that are typical of the stage farce,¹⁴ and the low window that shoots Anna out of King Aeneas’s palace into the Latium countryside could be an appropriate symbol for the humiliation that is being inflicted on the Virgilian model (the goddess Fortuna also clambers through windows to slip into King Servius’s bed). While Faunus is approaching the recumbent Omphale with his loins on fire, the narrator repeats Virgil’s comment on Dido’s tragic passion: *Quid non amor improbus audet?* (*Fasti* 2.331). The importance of the satyric element lies not only in the themes that it suggests but also in the particular treatment of the higher levels of literature that it proposes. By now Augustan literature resembles that of Athens in that it can boast of a category of elevated masterpieces, which offer material for parody and give a new topicality to the old lessons of the satyric drama.

If we extend this network of relationships even wider,¹⁵ we can reconsider a large part of the *Fasti* in terms of the *σατυρικόν*. The label “playful” that Ovid applies to his interludes sounds familiar when we think of ancient definitions of the satyric genre:¹⁶ it is “relaxing” and is intended to be an alternative to tragedy *ut spectator . . . Satyrorum iocis et lusibus delectaretur*. On the one hand we have stories, colors, and landscapes that go straight back to the model of the satyric drama, such as Dionysus, satyrs, Faunus, Hercules in woman’s clothing, processions

12. The meaningful label of Demetrius, *On Style* 169.

13. Above, n. 7.

14. On window entrances and exits as a recurrent feature of amatory mimes, note McKeown 1979, 76.

15. Other connections, sometimes very bold ones, are proposed by Wiseman 1988, 11–13.

16. Compare respectively Photius on *σατυρικά δράματα* and Diomedes, *GLK* 1:491.

of nymphs, sex in the open air, Silenus and braying asses; and on the other hand we also have images typical of Roman culture which acquire new values from this connection, such as the Luperci with their goatlike leaps and strips of goat hide, the plebeians' coarse songs, Flora's nude shows, and the Bacchic vein that runs through Rome's popular festivals (if Ovid had prepared a plan in twelve books, the last book would have had to treat the *Saturnalia*, thus giving a dramatic closural emphasis to the most comic of festivals). I am not saying that there is a complete synthesis between these; there is, rather, an attempt at creating a common wavelength, resulting from a large number of previous partial fusions. Ovid is searching for a literary language that is able to recuperate the "popular" element in the cultivated literature of the Augustan age.

Perhaps we can offer a suggestive example that reflects this annexation of the satyric element into the world of the *Fasti*; it is a story that Ovid tells us about an antique poet. The *Metamorphoses* has accustomed us to the important role played by the various artists that Ovid presents: such characters as Orpheus, Arachne, Daedalus, and Marsyas lend themselves to frequent interchanges with the figure of the narrator, and the poets above all (Orpheus, Calliope) sing of metamorphoses and act as Ovid's precursors. In the *Fasti*, only one figure of a poet can offer similar credentials, and this is Arion, the great poet who quells the violence of a hostile band of men with the power of his song (2.83–116). It may be a coincidence, of course, but the ancient literary histories celebrate Arion as the first poet to put satyrs on the stage:¹⁷ he is the inventor of the dithyramb and the original creator of satyric drama. Thus the satyrs were transferred from their natural wilderness to the city stages (cf. Hor. *A.P.* 244, *silvis deducti . . . Fauni*); and now, while paying homage to his predecessor Arion, Ovid restores them to their own countryside.

HORACE, OVID, AND HOW TO CREATE ORDER IN LITERATURE

The structure of this poem, which brings characters of such different kinds in contact with one another, is original and anomalous from all points of view. If we limit ourselves to analyzing its various components

17. Our tradition starts from Herodotus 1.21 (the historian has more than one contribution to the literary pedigree of the *Fasti*); cf. *Suda*, s.v. "Arion." Arion is a stimulating figure in the *Fasti* also because he is an ancient poet who commutes between Greece and Italy.

and then combining them according to the recipe for the “crossing of genres,” we have not made any real step forward. We really must appreciate how extremely unconventional and transgressive this literary operation is, in bringing together a cast of such diverse characters. In his discussion of the ancient theater, Diomedes contrasts the “*fabulae togatae*,” in *quibus imperatorum negotia agebantur et publica et reges Romani vel duces inducuntur, personarum dignitate et sublimitate tragoediae similes*, with the satyric and Atellan comedy, genres that can be assimilated one into the other and which are characterized by *argumentis dictisque iocularibus* and by the fact that *satyrorum personae inducuntur, aut siquae sunt ridiculae similes satyris* (*Ars Grammatica*, GLK 1:482). The objection can be raised that this grammatical and normative approach has a strong flavor of late classical times, and that it is unwise to project it backward onto the literary system of the Augustan age. The theory of *decorum* cannot possibly have been so rigidly applied in the poets’ actual practice, even if Horace and Ovid give a clear statement of it as an undisputed guiding principle.¹⁸

But to say that practice was independent of theory, and that there was a constant contagion between different genres, means ignoring the fact that the theory of *decorum* is something more than an aesthetic criterion: it concerns distinctions and hierarchies that few people in Rome found unimportant,¹⁹ that of man over woman, freeman over slave, high over low, public office over idleness. It is impossible to believe that the audience Ovid is writing for was accustomed to seeing publicly active “Roman kings and generals” alternate with satyrs and “other ridiculous characters” in a literary context that makes it hard to distinguish between the serious and the playful, between responsibility and entertainment. No common language or socially acceptable container can exist for a mixture of themes and styles which amounts to a breakdown of the conventional hierarchies. In a passage that would make marvelous material for a history of the place of sexual imagery in literary criticism, Horace writes that the relationship between our noble Tragedy and the satyrs is rather strained, and that Lady Tragedy takes on a coy, modest attitude in front of the aggressive satyrs, just like a matron who is forced to dance at a religious festival (*A.P.* 231–33). Ovid’s motives for cele-

18. Ovid *Rem.* 361–99 is prominent among texts often quoted in this kind of discussion.

19. This social dimension of *decorum* is vindicated in a landmark essay on Horace’s *Epodes*, Oliensis 1991.

brating a return of the satyric element cannot be easily separated from his relationship with the Augustan voice.²⁰

We could turn our inquiry in the direction of another unsolved problem, *obscura per obscuriora*. This approach may seem inconclusive, but at least it has the merit of bringing into our discussion the Augustan poetic text most nearly contemporary (among those preserved, excluding Ovid's own works) with the composition of the *Fasti*, the *Ars Poetica*, the "literary testament of an epoch,"²¹ published by Horace at the very moment that Ovid is starting on his mature production. The satyric element is a well-known bugbear for the interpreters of the *Ars*. The thirty central lines (220–50) of the epistle are dedicated to the perspectives and the artistic requirements of the satyric drama. Horace presents himself as a potential writer in this vein (235, *satyrorum scriptor*) and presupposes that his addressees, the Pisones, are particularly interested in the problems of this type of theatrical writing. Interpreters of the text are highly scandalized because (in the words of two of the best-known scholars in this field) "nothing could seem less relevant to the contemporary Roman literary scene," and the motives for Horace's choice remain "a major puzzle in Roman literary history."²² Two points arouse their surprise and skepticism: whether this type of theater was actually practiced in Horace's Rome, and how this discussion functions within the structure of the *Ars*. As regards the first point, a recent learned contribution demonstrates that we should not be too dogmatic:²³ even if we are unable to formulate a precise definition of it (the satyric is not a static category, our testimonials are mostly too ancient, and even the Attic material of the fifth century is only clear up to a point), a mythological-comic tradition existed in Rome for centuries, and it is striking that Vitruvius gives a detailed description of a scenography for satyric dramas (7.5.2), settings that would be perfect for a theatrical production of the comic

20. Fantham 1983, 187, sees a balance between *praetextatae* of Roman legend and substantial appropriation of satyric drama but does not view this coexistence as a potentially disruptive opposition; she quotes with some approval the position of Kraus 1968, 137, who explains the theme of failed sexual intrigue and frustrated impulses as a concession to Augustan pressures toward a moral reform. In fact, I am interested too in a possible link between the misadventures of Priapus and the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*.

21. So La Penna 1963, 157, with arguments for a late dating of the text at 158 ff. The problem of dating is still open and prompts unending debates: with a strong admixture of doubt and cautiousness, Brink has ended up proposing a date around 11–8 B.C.E. (1982, 557). On this hypothesis, the chronology invites us to consider with great interest the interaction between Horace's ideas and the development of Ovidian poetry.

22. Note respectively Williams 1968, 354, and Brink 1971, 273; they are writing from two independent and often conflicting perspectives.

23. Wiseman 1988.

sections of the *Fasti*. But it is the second point that remains the crux: even if we admit that this practice is not extinct, why does Horace put so much energy into discussing it? We need only remember that the *Ars* is not an encyclopedia article, but is written as a proposal and as a literary polemic. A sensible explanation has been formulated by Antonio La Penna: Horace is outlining "his own ideal of comic poetry: an elegant comic poetry, free of all vulgarity. . . . [He] recuperates the satyric drama, because it represents . . . his ideal of aristocratic comedy, very different from the plebeian farce."²⁴

Let us recapitulate a few details in Horace's picture of the development of the satyric drama. When the Fauni are dragged out of their forests, they must guard against both mannered affectation and coarse and offensive language (*A.P.* 244–47); the satyric and the "serious" must keep their distance; a matron, even if a festive occasion forces her to dance, always maintains her dignity; and gods and heroes must not pass abruptly from their gold and purple to lowly inns, adopting an unadorned language (225–33). Following these indications, I would insist on the fact that the satyric is important for Horace because it corresponds to a central area, and one which is not covered by the Augustan literary system. Horace clearly sees the danger of a sharp division between a high-level cultured poetry, with the court as its patron, and low-quality entertainment. In this context the satyric can be interpreted as an example, and partly also a metaphorical image, of a lacuna rather than as a realistic picture of the contemporary scene: it corresponds to what is still missing in a great national literature as a whole, not necessarily only in its drama, and the deliberate middle way between tragedy and farce that it represents is an allusion to one of Horace's constant preoccupations throughout his literary career, the concept of compromise.²⁵

Ovid's mature work gains a great deal if it is seen against the background of the epistle to the Pisones. We cannot spend much time on the

24. La Penna 1963, 153, 157.

25. The position that satyric drama used to have in the literary system—a tragedy "lowered" and "deviated" toward country settings (see especially Rossi 1972, 259 ff.)—could easily suggest to frame the satyric, *faute de mieux*, as an intermediate area between tragedy and comedy. I suspect that Ovid could have been interested in this status of the satyric because there are objective analogies with the poetics of the *Fasti*. The work had been projected (see above, part II, chapter 1) as a field of tensions mediating between elegiac juvenilia and epic. It is a common feature of Augustan poetics to look for analogies between the canon of "bookish" genres and theatrical classifications: in Ovid's critical repertory elegy is located, more or less explicitly, as an analogue to comedy: note especially *Rem.* 383 ff. (Thais as the incarnation of erotic elegy); and heroic epic has obvious affinity to serious tragedy.

Metamorphoses, but Ovid's epic is crowded with images that Horace had considered forbidden fantasies, examples of incompatible combinations: women with horses' manes, fish-men, human beings transformed into snakes before numerous witnesses, winged dragons, fish up trees, boars in the sea . . . ²⁶ Horace's theory is based on an ideal of consistency and proportion that reflects the unity of natural organisms and the discipline of social *decorum*: his prodigies are examples of an art to be rejected because they are incoherent, paradoxical, and do not obey the rules. The *Metamorphoses* enters this argument to demonstrate that the artistic consistency recommended by the *Ars* can remain such even if it is applied to a world that is unruly and magical in itself, and it achieves this by giving concrete reality to the negative examples mentioned in the *Ars Poetica*.

We may also be able to read the satyric poetics of the *Fasti* in the light of this discussion. Horace's recipe for an elegant and controlled comedy, which does not abase kings and heroes too much, which does not mix austere matrons with lascivious satyrs, is in certain ways applied here. There is measure and literary elegance in the *Fasti*'s poetical narration of

26. Metamorphosis is a powerful drive toward asymmetry, disunity, liberation of imagination. The *Ars Poetica* begins with a female face united by an artist to a horse's mane. The nymph Ocyrhoe, while she is being turned into a mare, performs for an instant this absurd configuration (*Met.* 2.663–73). The prohibition to represent *coram populo*—that is, on stage—the transformation on Cadmus into a serpent (*A.P.* 187) is violated with gusto: this is not stage action, but the epic narrator wants us to know that precisely in that fateful moment there were onlookers around (*Met.* 4.598, *quisquis adest—aderant comites*; thus sanctioning the omen of 3.98, *spectabere serpens*). It is indecorous that a fair woman *atrum / desinat in piscem* (*A.P.* 3–4): Glaucus, who is really so hybrid (*Met.* 13.963, *cruraque pinnigero curvata novissima pisce*), likes his originality (964, *haec species*); elsewhere a creature which *desinit in piscem* is, irreprehensibly, a fish, not a portent (4.727)—the Horatian paradox is naturalized. The adynata of *A.P.* 29–30—*qui variare cupit rem prodigialiter unam / delphinum silvis appingit, fluctibus aprum*—come true in the transgressive reality of the Flood, when the nightmares of Horatian aesthetic are made flesh: *silvasque tenent delphines et altis / incursant ramis agitataque robora pulsant* (*Met.* 1.302–3; also 305, *aprum*: a good hint in Galinsky 1975, 81); the unstoppable waters are mixing lambs and tigers, 304–5, but see *A.P.* 13. Winged serpents, already indicted by Lucilius (fr. 587 Marx), are here again, ready to be directed by their pilot Medea (*Met.* 7.219 ff.).

The law of internal unity and verisimilitude proclaimed by Horace has to be revised because, if mimesis holds good as a principle, then the reality to be described here is not “one” and “realistic”: it is prodigious and shape shifting. And of course some of the adynata made possible by Ovid are in fact allusions to a famous Horatian description of the Flood (1.296, *hic summa piscem deprendit in ulmo*; on *Carm.* 1.2.9, *piscium et summa genus haesit in ulmo*) as if to unmask a master who knew how to be, occasionally, less restrained than his classicizing prescriptions and literary-theoretical manifestos should allow him to be. The fish is caught (*deprendit*) on the Ovidian elm because untidy Horace left it in that surprising place (*haesit*).

“jocose” stories, in its cultivated paraphrase of the most vulgar amusements, in its ability to entertain without scurrility. Nevertheless these adaptations of the comic theater have to be integrated with a text that also presents itself as an official poem: if the reader does not put up his mental barriers quickly enough, satyrs and fauns will mingle, through no fault of their own, with purple-clad generals and chaste matrons. By an unforeseen distortion Horace’s rule has come to resemble the blueprint for a new disorder.

CHAPTER 8

“I forbid you to write poems with double meanings!,”
an officer once shouted to him. “Or poems with triple
meanings either! We have experts who can decipher
anything!”

— A STASI officer to a dissenting writer,
as reported in the *New York Times Magazine*,
12 April 1992

Miles gloriosus

— From an epigraph celebrating the victories of
Francisco Franco, as reported in oral tradition

This is a ghost chapter, without a title, not listed in my table of contents, and it is really just a retrospective pause.

If the literary genre of the *Fasti* is the subject of an ongoing debate (II.1), if its compositional form produces effects of irony and contrasting meanings by the apparently neutral means of parataxis (II.2), if the selection it makes from the material available brings to a head the problems inherent in the ideology of the times (II.3), if the genealogy it presents turns into a critical look at the present that is constructing this genealogy (II.4), if the authority of its divine informants is self-undermining (II.5), if its exegesis of religious rites deprives the past of its exemplary nature (II.6), and if its comic interludes sweep away certain accepted hierarchies in literature (II.7), then this is the moment when we should ask ourselves where all this is leading us. If we go back to some of the usual readings of the *Fasti* (“Ovid unenthusiastically does his duty as a *civis Romanus*”; “Ovid too, in the end, had to pay his tribute to the prince”; “Ovid proclaimed unequivocally his total loyalty to the new regime”), our own

picture of the text seems incompatible with them. In my opinion, however, that conventional image should not be canceled and replaced by this one (which would thus become the one “true” interpretation of Ovid’s *Fasti*), but the two images should be put together. The *Fasti* is also a poem of praise, and the interpretations made in my seven chapters are dependent on this function: without its official voice, without addressees who will accept it, the poem is an abortive game. This eulogistic writing spurs on and at the same time castigates that thirst for praise that is so characteristic of the holders of power in Roman culture: when the desire for praise allows itself to be seen, it puts itself at the mercy of rhetoric.²⁷

I can, I think, anticipate a serious objection. Let us think of the “experts who can decipher everything” of our initial motto, and of the worrying “palindromes and spooneristic couplets” that are used as evidence against Ovid in Ransmayr’s novel.²⁸ Some readings of this book—I hope not all of them, and especially not when they are based on intertextuality and on literary programs—at times come very close to seeing it as an example of the typical attitude of two disreputable classes of people: madmen and informers.

I have however prepared some lines of defense. Regarding the second of these categories, I could give an almost historical answer: the informer is the very character (at least according to Tacitus) who best captures the spirit of the times in the years covering late Augustus and early Tiberius. Some of the conditions, laid down by Leo Strauss in his *Persecution and the Art of Writing*,²⁹ that can justify a search for subversive and deviant readings are fulfilled in the case of the *Fasti*, if we consider that Ovid’s poem incorporates the contorted strategies of provocation, delation, and preemptive defense that fill Tacitus’s chronicles.

If however the question continues to be considered in terms of power, its natural conclusion is an unpromising set of alternatives: either the myth of anti-Augustan opposition or the model of “force majeure”—“this ironical interpretation is false because Ovid could not have dared. . . .” It is more helpful to see “Augustan-ness” not in terms of power (that is, power in the most traditional sense of the word) but in terms of discourse

27. By whipping and frustrating the appetite for a fulsome celebration, Ovid extends through the structure of his work the principle of frustrated excitation that is so prominent (see above in this chapter) in the marginalized sexual episodes.

28. See my introduction.

29. Strauss 1952.

and language. In this period Roman culture is confronted with an unprecedented campaign of persuasion and of revision. The essential quality of this new discourse is its universal diffusion at all levels. Jasper Griffin has argued that writers of the period were not really subjected to a totalitarian regime, and contrasts their situation with the bullets in the back of Stalin's times.³⁰ But if one looks at the everyday life of an average Roman citizen (after all, poets put to death, bonfires of books, and political suicides—but what about Cornelius Gallus?—are only one extreme aspect of the whole), the monarchy's impact on it was tremendous. I cannot think of a single aspect of daily life—praying, handling a coin, making love, strolling under an arcade—in which the Augustan message was not represented or implied.³¹ A poet who decides to compose *Fasti*, in short to write a Rome of his own, finds himself entangled in a process of rewriting that is much bigger than he is. He may well be tempted to insinuate himself into the discourse of that power that has invaded the life of every Roman, before an Augustan hand writes "The End."

Before treating this very argument (the end as theme and procedure: part III), I have one last reflection to make on the premises that have been my guide up to now: they will be less insidious if they are not left implicit. I sincerely believe that students of Augustan poetry ought to give serious attention to the question of propaganda. I have no new discoveries to offer, only shifts of emphasis and doubts, more or less the ones that cause me to speak of Augustan "discourse" more often than of "propaganda."

The problems that Ovid's *Fasti* has always set its interpreters are connected with a fundamental problem inherent in the concept of "Augustan propaganda." This problem becomes more and more difficult the closer we get to that period which our division under time headings has left without a name, the period that covers the final years of Augustus's reign and the first years of that of Tiberius.³² The category "propaganda"

30. Griffin 1984, 203, well criticized by Wallace-Hadrill 1990, 249.

31. A very impressive synthesis is Millar 1984.

32. We might consider a label like "third Augustan age" after Brink 1982, 526–72, has elaborated the concept of a "second Augustan age" to be bracketed, more or less, by the death of Virgil and the death of Horace (19–8 B.C.E.): a distinctive feature of the period is the eclipse of Maecenas. Everybody is aware that periodizations like "Philippi to Augustus's death," but also "Actium to Augustus's death," are too broad to be really useful. It is difficult to reach a consensus without being explicit about individual agendas; for my purposes, as I implicitly state in this chapter, it would be difficult to accept any periodization

is much easier to apply during the years of open struggle when literature too is involved in the process of constructing the “outside” enemy. When writers who are well disposed toward Octavian collaborate in denouncing Sextus Pompeius as a brigand chief and Anthony as a drug addict, it is not difficult to formulate a scale of participation and to measure each poet’s degree of involvement. The question becomes far more complex in a society that no longer manifests explicit divisions. Yet at least one constant can be noted: the role of the outside enemy, which is now inherited by a new ideological construct, the *inside* enemy, connected with the lifestyles and behavior that the prince disapproves of (and this constant, by the way, is awkward for those critics who see the text of the *Ars amatoria* as either frivolous and innocuous or else conformist and pro-modern). It is however true that the function of propaganda has now become unifying, rather than aggressive and partisan as before. This intense and unceasing work of unification, with no outside enemies or fixed targets, entirely directed toward the convergence between values and needs, is just what characterizes the atmosphere of the early (of the late early) Empire in our eyes, and what makes it so difficult to grasp. Any attempt to find a place for Ovid in a precise lineup in the political struggle is doomed to failure: we can lightheartedly reject such pigeon-holes as neo-Pythagorean sects, “modernizers,” or supporters of Caius Caesar or Germanicus. From a certain moment on, we quite simply cannot define what it meant, what it felt like in concrete terms, to be against Augustus. This field of inquiry and verification has been closed to us by that same all-embracing operation of unification, which other branches of classical studies have documented for us so well, but Roman poetry hardly at all.

But we must also free ourselves from the old ideas of “uncommitted” and “entertaining” literature. Even if we have lost the guidelines of clear political and ideological oppositions, the evidence to be found in Ovid’s text can still be consulted, and, as we have seen, it speaks to us in a language that closely concerns Augustan discourse. It is obvious that our ideas of propaganda vary greatly according to the means of communication used and the social classes addressed: no one can seriously think

that entails a cleavage between Ovid’s midcareer and the late Horace; the second book of epistles and also *Carmina* 4 (as interpreted e.g. by Putnam 1986) are shaped by concerns that are very relevant to an understanding of Ovid, and it is helpful to compare and contrast the two authors as part of the same historical segment.

that a wide stratum of the population was interested in the subtle constitutional manipulation or the revival of traditional language that characterize the early years of the regime. The most widespread propaganda speaks an elementary figurative language of sacrifices, statues, processions, and coins. But even these communicative acts can give rise to deviant and hostile readings (like our epigraph, "*Miles gloriosus*"),³³ and the privilege of an active, creative reception is not limited to literature. Propaganda is not simply a circular process, a proleptic version of the consensus it is intended to produce: it also presupposes that a few areas of resistance and diversity still exist. That is why it would be dangerous to reduce poetry to the status of a series of simple captions for a uniform figurative language of power, an "image power" as opposed to a verbal powerlessness.

Naturally, a poetic text on the subject of "Roman antiquities" is a communicative act that appeals to a narrower and more limited audience: but this does not lead to the logical conclusion that the *Fasti* is only a frivolous variation on conformism to the regime. Our aim so far has been to read the poem as an exploration of certain critical points of Augustan discourse, and this is necessarily a subtle procedure, because Ovid is not confronting a crude partisan political message, but a campaign of persuasion that has attached itself to the values and images already present in Roman society. Here again the scholars of Rome's figurative art come up against similar problems. From a certain date onward, certain characteristics of Augustus's image are superimposed on the official iconography of particular divinities, while there is a successive and parallel movement by which other divine iconographies begin to take on a greater resemblance to the image of the prince: it is not easy for scholars to decide when it is more correct to speak of "assimilation" to the divine, and when of simple honorific "comparison."³⁴ But contemporary observers were also caught up in this ambiguity. These oscillations are part of the program of Augustan discourse, and any discussion of "Augustus" means handling a shifting signifier, which is difficult to pin down. For me nothing could be more appropriate than Ovid's dedication to Augustus (in the *Tristia*) of a work entitled *Metamorphoses*.

33. This reported inscription poses a number of problems: Does it really exist? How was it received by different audiences through different stages of its existence? Was the author well-read in classical culture? or blessed by a subconscious creativity? And what kind of reception was he anticipating for his work?

34. See e.g. Pollini 1990, for a rich sample of this ambiguity.

The poet of the *Fasti* picks out the weak points in Augustan discourse—its myths of continuity, of a return to the past, of the exemplarity of the origins, of the founder, of arms, and of preservation of the antique—and thus shows that there is still someone who is capable of clearly seeing the connection between political persuasion and the remodeling of the Roman identity. Before this superimposition becomes complete identification—to quote those words of the exiled Ovid that we used as one of our initial epigraphs, “When I see him, I seem to see Rome”—the fractured and Callimachean form of the *Fasti* still offers us some ways of seeing other possible Romes.

PART THREE

The End

THE YEAR OF SIX MONTHS

Looking over his work from exile, Ovid finds that his *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* have something in common:

carmina mutatas hominum dicentia formas
infelix domini quod fuga rupit opus
(*Trist.* 1.7.13–14)

sex ego Fastorum scripsi totidemque libellos
· · · · ·
idque tuo nuper scriptum sub nomine, Caesar,
et tibi sacratum sors mea rupit opus
(*Trist.* 2.549–52)

A poem narrating metamorphoses of humans, broken by the unhappy exile of the author. . . . I wrote six plus six books of *Fasti* . . . this work, written under your name, Caesar, dedicated to you, was broken by my destiny. . . .

Rupit opus conveys a sense of violence more than simple interruption; the destiny of the two poems (as we see in *Trist.* 1.7.14 and 2.552, respectively) matches the destruction of the work of Arachne, a work beyond envy but not beyond the hysterical anger of Athena: *rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes* (*Met.* 6.131). With exile, Augustus has damaged beyond repair (so it seems) two poetic masterpieces still “in progress.” Ovid uses indirection because, as we know from elsewhere, the

Metamorphoses were more finished, and the *Fasti* less finished, than the poet lets us believe (although it is important to remember that this is directed, especially in *Tristia* 2, to a very important reader). Two possible intentions can be discovered, "in the former case literary and in the latter political."¹ The ostensible incompleteness of the epic casts upon Ovid's exile the sublime literary myth of Virgil's will: exile as Death of the Artist, obsession for perfection, the decision to burn a masterpiece. The analogy is literary, but not without political significance. After having personally intervened to save the *Aeneid* from destruction, the emperor now provokes cremation of the *Metamorphoses*. We will have something similar to say about the political background of the *Fasti*. Ovid makes it clear that he has already written all twelve books of the Roman year. His banishment from Rome affects a work that should be dear to Augustus, and now the poem is cut short.

It is strange that the *Fasti* was broken into two exact halves, just as the unmetrical *duodecim* is cut into *sex . . . totidemque*. Chance and compromise can impart various forms to a literary text, but this is one of the most curious: more than incomplete, the poem is literally half-complete. Books 1–6 are as complete as the *Metamorphoses*, while books 7–12 have disappeared without a trace. It does not matter what Ovid wished to say or suggest with *scripsi*, because, whatever we want to see in the verb, *sex . . . totidemque* can only mean "twelve." Six books published, twelve "written." Stopping halfway can be seen as a particular act of incompleteness: the missing part is highlighted, and the poet does not entirely renounce his capacity for the project and for unitary form. Of course, the plan of the *Fasti* presupposes a break in the middle: each book is a well-formed unity, and we expect a gravitational point after the first six. With remarkable insight, an anonymous writer has produced an introductory distich for *Fasti* 7:

tu quoque mutati causas et nomina mensis
a te qui canitur, maxime Caesar, habes.

Most celebrated Caesar, you too have contributed a new name for a month,
the one I am singing now.

The result is a parallel between the second, missing part and two famous Second Parts: the second pair of the four *Georgics* (*tu quoque, magna Pales . . .*) and, above all, the second half of another poem organized in

1. Hinds 1987, 137 n. 23.

twelve books (*Aen.* 7.1, *tu quoque litoribus nostris*, also with a character who “gives her name” to something); a common beginning unites them.

Ovid behaves, if one may put it this way, as if the entire second part of the diptych has been a victim of the poet’s exile, while the first part remains unharmed. Yet we know very well that *Fasti* 1–6 has been rearranged more than once, and not superficially. Why the complete silence about *Fasti* 7–12? One possible answer is that the exiled poet lacked his primary tools: sources and books. It should be clear, however, that this situation did not prevent Ovid from drafting a thesis on mythology such as the *Ibis*, and that the language used by Ovid to lament his lack of books (*Trist.* 3.14.37) is intended as literary allusion: Ovid recalls a book in which a poet lamented, “I have no books” (Catull. 68.33 ff.).

A better clue emerges when we examine the possible themes for *Fasti* 7–12. The twin proems to books 5 and 6 analyze the names “May” and “June,” and discuss competing aetiologies. A similar investigation was not possible for the next two months, whose names leave no room for discussion. A dramatic intervention in the history of the calendar renamed the months for two members of the Julian family. Each reader of the poem should feel the effect of surprise that arises when the text fails to reach its promised political climax: the celebration that could have been an effective center of the poem is deferred sine die. A quick look at the official agenda would have presented the bard of the civil year: 1 JULY, AUGUSTUS RENOUNCES CONSULSHIP; 4 JULY, ARA PACIS AUGUSTAE; 12 JULY, BIRTHDAY OF DIVINE JULIUS; 20 JULY (and ten following days), GAMES FOR VENUS GENETRIX (of the Julian line); 1 AUGUST, OCTAVIAN TAKES ALEXANDRIA; 9 AUGUST, PHARSALUS; 13–15 AUGUST, AUGUSTUS’S TRIPLE TRIUMPH; 2 SEPTEMBER, ACTIUM. This list does not include lesser occasions and, most important, growing expectation for 23 September—the cosmic date which whole districts of Asia had chosen to reform their own calendars, beginning the year with the emperor’s birthday. Looking at these dates, one can see that Ovid was reluctant to take up the task or, rather, that he wanted to arrange a postponement: time and leisure to complete the Roman year, with its nettling Augustan dates, in Italy instead of Tomi. But this remains hypothetical (and if others want to use this argument to support a traditional reading of the *Fasti* as conformist, I do not). It is interesting in this regard to look at the final part of *Fasti* 6, a text crucial to all these questions. My starting point is the fact that this text had a regular circulation, as Ovid acknowledges. It appeals to a

public, and although it is just half of the project, it is not a stolen manuscript: this half has the right to be considered as a text.

We need to take the question of an audience very seriously. All Ovid's work suggests that the author is aware of being in contact with a vast, anonymous public that determines literary success. The Romans who were Ovid's regular readers for some twenty years expected clever manipulations and surprising turns. The poet accustomed his audience to interventions that changed even the physical text with which they had made a "literary agreement." Reading Ovid is a contract that can be renegotiated at any moment. The *Amores* was reduced from five books to three, a reduction that embodies a lighter, more "slender" poetics. Tragedy interferes (3.1) with the *Amores*, which have already resisted (and taken advantage of) incursions by epic (1.1) and *gigantomachia* (2.1). The *Ars* begins as a work dedicated to manly love, and without warning brings in a third book on the Amazons. The *Remedia* declares war on the *Ars*. The *Ibis* claims to be the precursor of an impending iambic work. The *Metamorphoses* has a brief, mysterious proem, but the *Tristia* is concerned with publishing a new preface adapted to the author's changed fortunes.² *Tristia* 2 offers a complete catalog of Ovidian poetry, framed by a tendentious manual of literary history, with a timely "authentic" reading of the *Ars amatoria* that deconstructs the alternative reading proposed by the emperor. Finally, the *Metamorphoses*, as I have tried to show, have a redundant tendency toward completion and closure, but end up introducing a "metamorphic" reading that opens the way to less conclusive and authoritative readings of texts.

If there is a common factor in all these manipulations, I would say that the form of Ovid's texts, their stable scheme and structure, is open to constant negotiation with the reader. Are we so sure that the *Fasti* are just an interrupted utterance and that the interruption cannot be a communicative "gesture?" The personal situation of the author invests the damaged year with at least a potential metaphorical meaning: the time of Ovid's life is severed like the structure of the poem.

LET US COUNT THE DAYS

Some comment is necessary on the last ten days of *Fasti* 6. In general, there is a recurrent sense that time is escaping (6.725, 771-72, 795, 797):

2. Hinds 1985.

Iam sex et totidem luces de mense supersunt. . . .

 tempora labuntur, tacitisque senescimus annis
 et fugiunt freno non remorante dies. . . .

 tot restant de mense dies, quot nomina Parcis. . . .

 tempus Iuleis cras est natale Kalendis. . . .

By now six days and six again are left of the month. . . . Time slips away
 and we grow old in the course of the noiseless years, and the days, un-
 bridled, run away. . . . As many days of the month remain as the Fates have
 names. . . . Tomorrow the calends of July will have its birthday.

Tacitisque senescimus annis. . . : it would be difficult to find a more appropriate, and particular, context for this trite cliché: we are reading it (as we, too, grow old) in the context of a poem that represents the year. In a poem so concretely identified with the measurement of time (each month a book, the numbering of the days always intertwined with the progress of writing and reading . . .), the increased use of temporal signs suggests the presence of an approaching deadline. Is the book about to “expire?” The *Parcae* (795) are not only a figurative presence, motivated by an elegant reference to the number three, but also a reminder of transience and interruption. The years (771) are “quiet” as soon as the yearly poem is about to become silent. The days run away (772) as if the poet were losing his grasp on the flux of time. Besides the normal thematic formula of pressing time (Verg. *G.* 3.284, on the work, its themes and composition: *sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus*), *tempora labuntur* reminds us that *tempora* is not only the didactic theme of the *Fasti* but also the initial word of the poem,³ appropriate as a title. The work also flees. While time and the poem on Times are both passing, there are only seven days before the month of June ends: *post septem luces Iunius actus erit* (6.774). Thirteen days remain, seven, three, and one: no other book in the *Fasti* has a similar countdown. The themes of the last days before the Julian calends offer other suggestive developments.

21 June

The last narrative section of the poem (6.733–62) has a familiar ring for readers who are acquainted with the *Metamorphoses* book 15 and its

3. See above, p. 58. On the theory that the first proem is a successor to an original proem that still surfaces in the poem to *Fasti* 2, I agree with Miller 1991, 143–44.

multiple endings. The actor Asclepius and the supporting actor Hippolytus/Virbius are central figures in the conclusion of the epic. Again, the story of Asclepius is significant. Jove destroyed him with his thunderbolt, but then repented and allowed his rebirth (759–62); Asclepius is a kind of victorious Prometheus, achieving the very height of his art in spite of Jove's divine anger and opposition. There are many other meaningful connections between the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*. In the legitimate prologue of the elegiac poem, Janus, divine caretaker and god of beginnings, has explained (1.103) that he is identifiable with Chaos: a connection with the beginning of the epic is implied, where Chaos is the original state before the creation of the world and of narrativity (*Met.* 1.5 ff). Thus the two poems have a slender thread of common plan, from chaos to the regenerated (and regenerating) Asclepius (who is also, like Janus, a god of 1 January).

The suggestion of closure contained in the name of the god Coronides (6.746, see Barchiesi 1997) is picked up by the description of the crowned ship (6.779, *coronatae . . . lintres*) and the crown for the Lares (792, *ubi fit docta multa corona manu*). Crown, coronis, and coronation achieve a ceremonial poetic of closure.

24, 25, 26 June

The last celebration of June, addressed to *Fortuna Fortis*, has the air of a plebeian festival. The wine runs (6.780, *multaque per medias vina bibantur aquas*; 778, *nec pudeat potos inde redire domum*) and the effects of alcohol mark the following days (785–86, *rediens male sobrius . . . aliquis . . . at si non esset potus . . .*). As drinking prepares for the solstice, this protracted carnival bypasses a date that has a very different meaning for Roman society.⁴ On 26 June, 4 C.E., Augustus solemnly adopted his

4. The conspicuous omission is noted by Syme 1978, 33–34. This omission is crucial for Syme's theory that Ovid cut off his work on the *Fasti* some years before his exile. The poem nevertheless had a circulation even earlier (*Trist.* 2.549), was worked on for some time, updated in several places, and changed to keep in line with new turns in the succession and with the accession of Germanicus (Fantham 1985). If one accepts that the text is meant to be read as a poem in six books, the absence of Tiberius is strange and cannot simply be explained as a result of composing in layers. The new prologue to Germanicus was a clear sign of adjustment to an era in which a lack of interest in the new successor would be dangerous. Only a reader like Syme, careful, rigorous and with a strong sense of history, could be satisfied with the conclusion that the main body of the poem continues to reflect an earlier political context. It is interesting to compare the observations of Nicolet 1989, 36–37 on the effect of the "Parthian triumph" that Ovid "anticipates" in *A.A.* 1.213 ff.

successor. The national calendar celebrates the event, but as the people descend to the river, and the wine causes lapses (as stated explicitly at 6.789), Ovid fails to record the epiphany of a new emperor.

Such an omission requires interpretation. If we assume, as a reasonable starting point, that the poet had something to do with the circulation of his text in the years following Tiberius's proclamation, then he was presumably not indifferent to public reaction. The absence of Tiberius might have been either a great mistake or a conscious omission. There is another aspect to the problem: the importance of the omitted anniversary places in relief what the poet decided not to omit, namely, the traditional celebration of Fortuna Fortis. This cult has deep roots in the lives of the Roman masses, whereas the Claudii, the family of the new emperor, are a pinnacle of aristocracy, with a well-known reputation for intolerance and arrogance. (In 6.770 the battle of Metaurus is described without mention of its victor, Claudius Nero.) Syme observes that Tiberius was undoubtedly trying to react to this antiplebeian tradition and to win popular support again, and he cites news of Tiberius's efforts (about 16 C.E.) to strengthen the cult of the plebeian Fortune.⁵ But this is not enough when the text we have not only hides Tiberius's accession to the throne, but gives evidence for another, very different coronation (6.781–82):

Plebs colit hanc, quia qui posuit, de plebe fuisse
fertur, et ex humili sceptrum tulisse loco.

The people worship her, since her temple's founder was a man of the people,
and rose to the throne, they say, from a lowly condition.

In this aetiology, the new king is Servius Tullius, son of a slave, champion of a very different kind of monarchy. To speak of his accession to the throne is not at all diplomatic if the day should be dedicated to a more recent successor; the king celebrated for his humble origins is not an appropriate substitute for Tiberius.

26 June

To speak of the solstice has some meaning in a text that follows the development of the seasons. The equinox that balances day and night (3.877, *tempora nocturnis aequa diurna*) was placed at the end of the third book, and divides the six surviving books into two corresponding

5. Syme 1978, 34.

halves.⁶ The autumnal equinox and the winter solstice will never be mentioned. The former is Augustus's birthday, and the latter the day of his zodiac sign, Capricorn.

30 June

No other book of the *Fasti* has a final day so well marked by the narrative voice (6.797–98):

Tempus Iuleis cras est natale Kalendis:
Pierides, coeptis addite summa meis.

Tomorrow the calends of July will have its birthday: Muses, add the last details to my venture.

Tomorrow the calends will arrive, honored by the name of the Julii; the poet and his readers know the strength of this name. For a moment one would be tempted (with Holleman) to explain *summa* as a reference to the Augustan culmination that should inaugurate the next month: “diese Worte implizieren, dass der Dichter sich unmittelbar vor der Klimax (*summa*) des Werkes befand.”⁷ But this cannot be the literal meaning: *addite summa* indicates that the poet is asking for a full and proper conclusion, as if this could be the final touch to the *summus liber*⁸ of the calendrical project. The promise of a continuation under the sign of the ruling family is threatened by a sense of closure, and resulting exclusion.

Seen in this light, the aetiological theme of the last day is not without resonance. The temple of Hercules and the Muses vowed in 33 B.C.E. by

6. The poem of book 4 has a certain similarity to the tradition of “poems in the middle” studied by Conte 1992: it contains a dense discussion of poetics and even a “doubling” of the poem of book 1 with a literal citation (4.11–12, *tempora cum causis* . . .). “Poems in the middle” are a classical way of placing in relief the closure of a text, marking its architectonic completion. Once more, the condition of the *Fasti* as a “half” poem is paradoxical.

This work was complete before the publication of Feeney 1992, a fascinating essay that I think complements my own ideas. Feeney discovers in the poem a growing consciousness of a premature end, while I read (paradoxical) signs of closure in the end of book 6. These two ways of reading can easily be combined, because there is a common factor, the growing tension between the poetics of the work and its reference to Augustan discourse. On this topic Hinds 1992 is now indispensable.

7. Holleman 1988, 390.

8. An expression used by Quintilian (*Inst.* 3.8.42) to identify the last book of his work. *Coepta* is for Ovid the project and the development of a work, cf. *Met.* 1.2; 8.200–201, *postquam manus ultima coepto / imposita est*; A.A. 1.30; A.A. 1.771, *pars superat coepti* (the second book; the third book comes as a surprise); *Trist.* 2.555 (on the *Metamorphoses*) *quamvis manus ultima coeptis[th]// defuit*.

References to *coepta* often occur at beginnings, and the use of beginnings in allusive endings is an Alexandrian strategy analyzed by Zetzel 1983, 261.

L. Marcius Philippus suggests in its dedication a celebration of poetry, well-suited to the epilogue of a work in verse. The genealogy of the founder is a knot of stories and compliments. Philippus's father was the stepfather of Augustus. His wife, Atia, brings an important name to the family of the two Caesars. The family, the Marci Reges, goes back via Ancus Martius to Numa, tracing another connection between the family of Julius Caesar and the prestigious background of its origins.⁹ The temple, as Ovid surely knew, was a replacement for an *aedicula* created by Numa, the person of ancient Rome who receives the best treatment in the *Fasti*.¹⁰ From the marriage of Philippus is descended the chaste Marcia, whom Ovid praises for her beauty, morality, and her family ties to the Caesars—a conspicuous choice in a poem that has little space for private individuals, and even less for women, however distinguished. It may be worth noting that the last elegy in the “Roman” book of Propertius (the poetic project which the *Fasti* takes as its model) is dedicated to the praise of another matron, a noblewoman related to the family of Augustus. The language used by Ovid in 6.800, *cui dedit invitas victa noverca manus*, sounds like an allusion to the same elegy, 4.11.86–88: *noverca . . . dabit illa manus*. Both Cornelia and Marcia have a connection with the emperor emphasized by the poet (cf. Prop. 4.11.55–60). By a curious coincidence there appears in both texts a political figure with a great name and an unclear future. A promising son of Cornelia, Lucius Emilius Paulus, will be swept away by the events of 8 C.E.. Marcia's husband, Paulus Fabius Maximus, will have a similar destiny some years later. He is certainly the political protagonist with most space in the *Fasti* (except, of course, for members of the imperial family). He is the center of attention when Ovid praises the *gens Fabia* and its powerful cognomen Maximus. This man will be swallowed up (in 14 C.E.) by a mysterious intrigue, often interpreted as the last attempt to stop the accession of Tiberius: fragmentary testimonia from the last years of Augustus's reign suggest that Paulus was not only independent of Tiberius but also “the foremost among his enemies.”¹¹

Syme imagines that the poem was already essentially complete by 4 C.E., and is therefore not concerned that it combines (in the “neutral”

9. The connection is important for the self-fashioning of the Julii because Numa is a figure of peace and wisdom that complements the militarism of Romulus, and also because Romulus is less present in the genealogical tree than would be desirable. He is related to Aeneas (and Venus) and Mars, but the normal view is that he died without sons; besides, he is seen more as a common ancestor of the race than as a specific founder of the Caesars.

10. On the importance of Numa in the text of the *Fasti*, see Hinds 1992.

11. Syme 1978, 146.

succession of the calendar) a censored imperial anniversary with a tribute to the Fabian gens, the omission of Tiberius with interest in relations between Augustus and the Fabii. From this perspective, he can see the celebration of the temple of Philippus as “an innocuous point of termination.”¹² Yet it is difficult to see Fabius, who is no longer Horace’s *centum puer artium* (4.1), as an innocuous figure, cut off from the current of political tensions that accompany the entire period of succession a period in which the *Fasti*, interrupted in 8 C.E. and reworked for several years afterward, have every right to be placed. Whatever the details of its composition, it is crucial to observe that the poem *says* it was revised and brought up to date; recent political developments such as the death of Augustus and the rise of Germanicus are mentioned with so much emphasis that the poet assumes a heavy responsibility for the rest, including what has been excluded from the rearrangement and can be seen as a deliberate omission.

The reader cannot be sure that the ending of the *Fasti* is isolated from the tensions of political discourse. This peaceful family album includes shadows and dangers. Paulus Fabius Maximus, the talented young man who began the last book written by Horace, now marches (with his wife the chaste Marcia) across an arena of dynastic intrigue. After asking the Muses about the history of the temple, and after listening to the Muse of history, Ovid ends on a note of quiet approval (6.811–12):¹³

Sic cecinit Clio, doctae adsensere sorores:
adnuit Alcides increpuitque lyram.

That’s what Clio sang, and her learned sisters agreed: Hercules approved with a twang of his lyre.

The consent and approval of Hercules and of the Muses are the last published words of the *Fasti*. The Muses are reunited after the discord of 5.9, *dissensere deae*. Clio (perhaps by chance) has the last word after having been the first informant to speak in the *Aetia* of Callimachus (p. 19, 30 Pf.). The approval of Hercules repeats the approval of Germanicus who had been invoked in the proem (1.5, *adnue conanti*): and the par-

12. Syme 1978, 35.

13. Once again, the effect of unanimity is in contrast to its background. The poet finishes with praise of Hercules and asks the Muses who placed them next to the hero, *cui dedit invitas victa noverca manus* (6.800), an interesting way to end a book marked with the name of Juno and aggressively claimed by her in the proem (6.25; 77) against the cautious claims of Hercules’ wife. Propertius’s fourth book (4.9.71–72) is again a relevant model.

allelism is a further tribute to the new prince. *Increpuit* recalls a message that ended Ovid's elegiac production, at the farewell of the *Amores*: *corniger increpuit . . . Lyaeus* (3.15.17). The harmony of the lyre, a final gesture (in half a text!) toward peace and coronation, reflects the last poem published by Horace (4.15.1–2):

Phoebus volentem proelia me loqui
victas et urbis increpuit lyra

I was trying to sing of battles and defeated cities, but Phoebus, with his lyre, disapproved.

Ovid has just praised what had been the theme of 4.1, the marriage of Paulus Fabius Maximus, so there was an additional reason for invoking the last book of Horace's lyrics. The sound of the lyre was a call for Horace: Phoebus was demanding respect for lyric verse in a book of poetry dangerously fond of sublimity and solemn celebration. But now, in Ovid, the lyre plays a harmony of approval: the meaning of Apollo's warning is inverted. The approval of Hercules and the Muses is the deserved reward for a poet who has discovered how to write a poem that is Roman and official, but also protected against war and epic catastrophe;¹⁴ Hercules of the Muses replaces Phoebus—a god who is surprisingly missing from the pantheon of the *Fasti* (a celebration postponed to the second semester?). It is possible that the vignette of Hercules also suggests the hopes that the poet places on Paulus: the Fabii are descendants of Hercules (when he visited ancient Latium) and Ovid elsewhere observes in the politician Paulus Fabius Maximus the gifts of a *Herculea simplicitas* (*Pont.* 3.3.100).¹⁵

This might be the end, but, as in other Ovidian endings, there is still room for doubt. The history of the temple of Hercules Musarum includes a glaring omission, almost an historical inaccuracy—a serious defect of

14. The intervention of Apollo turns the epilogue of the lyric book into a celebration of Augustan peace. There is a clear tie with the return of Augustus in 13 B.C.E. and with the senatorial decree that dedicates to the emperor the project of the Ara Pacis Augustae. The decree has a date to insert in the imperial *Fasti*, 4 July. Without moving from the Campus Martius, and at a short distance on the calendar, Ovid would have confronted this anniversary. It is clear that his Hercules of the Muses is less bound to official celebrations than was Horace's Apollo.

Hercules' approval for the book of *Fasti* sounds like a delayed answer to Propertius's prayer for his book of aetiological elegies, 4.9.71–72: *Sancte pater, salve cui iam favet aspera Iuno: / Sance velis libro dexter inesse meo*. The prayer was addressing the same god, and both contexts have a reference to Juno's reconciliation. (On the importance of Hercules in the Propertian book of Roman elegies, see De Brohun 1992.)

15. See in general Syme 1986, 403–20.

memory for a poet inspired by Clio and authorized to sing the aetiology and antiquity of Rome. The new temple is not as new as it seems: more precisely, it is a second edition of one of the most famous monuments of the Republic, a restoration. The ancient temple of Hercules Musarum was designed and dedicated by Fulvius Nobilior, the patron of Ennius. The symbolic apparatus of the temple was an impressive homage to the official status of poetry and art, and to the growing integration of Greek and Roman traditions. More important, the temple was the first official repository of the *Fasti* of Rome, edited and commented on by the same Nobilior. One can think of few sites better suited to closing a poem called the *Fasti*. Ovid's annals, an original version of the traditional record, glance back to a remote predecessor, and to a place that was a repository for the ancient material used in this poem. The Muses who are questioned about the origins of the temple are, after all, the Muses who long survived in that same site, transferred there from Ambracia by Nobilior (cf. Pliny *Nat.* 35.66). The lack of a direct indication of continuity shows that antiquarian interest (an important theme in the *Fasti*) can not only reinterpret the past but can also make it unreadable by erasing its tracks.

This might be the end, but there is still a subtle suspicion. Nobilior's dedication was a direct consequence of the capture of Ambracia; it was designed to commemorate a war using Greek religious symbols, and to refigure victory and triumph with the transfer of new gods. Bringing the Muses to Rome was no minor distinction for a victorious general, himself Musagetes. The fall of Ambracia was told in book 15 of Ennius's *Annales*; the author was a client of Nobilior, a devotee of the Greek Muses, and an expert on Pythagorean imagery. It has already occurred to students of Ennius that the end of *Annales* 15 (for some time, before a later addition, the absolute end of that narrative, and preserved as such in some editions) would have been the right place for some allusion to the figurative and cultural program of the new temple:¹⁶ military victory

16. The idea was put forth by Skutsch in 1944 (= Skutsch 1968, 18–20) and since then has remained speculative, even if several scholars find it attractive. For archaeological and historical data, see L. Richardson 1977 and the very complete Martina 1981. Conjectures on the end of *Annales* 15 have a special importance because the series of books 1–15 was conceived as a closed entity and given independent circulation (cf. Skutsch 1968, 20; Hofmann 1985 even thinks that the number of books in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was influenced by the three pentads of Ennius).

Feeney 1992 now proposes a connection between Ennius and Ovid with respect to the temple of Hercules and the Muses, and I think the analogy is stronger if we consider that the temple was the first location for the *Fasti* conceived by antiquarian doctrine, a kind of

sung by Ennius, and the promise of a *Musenweihe* of Roman culture directed by Ennius. The Muses, already invoked by Ennius at the beginning of the first proem, were thus able to give a clear sign of their presence at Rome. If these speculations have any basis, I think Ovid would have been interested in the coincidence. The restored divinities seal with their consent a work of poetic archaeology that claims to bring to light the most ancient of annals: *sacra recognosces, annalibus eruta priscis* (*Fasti* 1.11; cf. 4.11, *tempora cum causis, annalibus eruta priscis*).

QUAE IAM FINIS ERIT? (*AEN.* 12.793)

To bring something to an end is a clear sign of power. This is a recurring complication in my study of Ovidian endings; I cannot separate poetic closure from the politics of closure.

We cannot define closure simply in terms of poetic form because more than the responsibility of form or the control of poetic architecture is at stake. In two great projects, the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*, the act of ending offers the reader a political analogy. Both texts involve, for different reasons, the dimension of Augustan time, time as appropriated by Augustan discourse:¹⁷ the progress of universal chronology from the beginning to the Empire, and the rotation of the Roman year in which the emperor is continually present. Augustan discourse gives a common slant to these methods of taming time: the flux of history has a culmination and conclusion in universal peace; the Roman year absorbs the transformation of Rome into its *telos*, the Restoration of the New Order that puts an end to change and disturbing memories. Augustan discourse is naturally directed toward a unifying and totalizing end. If we see closure as “the degree to which a work can resolve in a satisfying way the expectations and tensions developed by its growth,” then the discourse that motivates the Augustan constitution seems an extreme example of closure. Augustus completes and stabilizes all that was in flux, incomplete, open. To write an ending to the annals of triumphs, a supplement to the *carmen arvale*, to close Janus, to reclaim the Golden Age, to gather

archaeology for the Ovidian project of Antiquities of the Roman Calendar. This “closural allusion” to the *Annales* is likely enough in a passage that, as I have tried to show, cites the final poems of the final books of Ovid (*Amores*), Propertius, and Horace (*Odes*) respectively.

17. See the illuminating work of Wallace-Hadrill 1987. On closure in *Metamorphoses* 15 see my paper, Barchiesi 1997.

the *Annales maximi*, to describe an accurate geography of the known world: Augustus defines himself not only as the First, but also as the Last and Definitive Man of Rome.

THE FIRST SPECTATOR

Readers who take the closure of the *Metamorphoses* as an Augustan synthesis “from chaos to imperial cosmos”¹⁸ are prisoners of that *Zeitgeist* to which they themselves contribute, with their tendentious imaginations about ancient Rome. But who protects from similar dangers those who go in search of dissonance and deviant voices? “Anti-Augustanism” is a weak position, with a very weak name; who really knows what it meant to be “against?”¹⁹ But it is precisely the poetic text, with its erratic irony, that creates and makes necessary these contrasting roles of the Augustan and anti-Augustan. The “opponents” pay a high price; they are forced to read the text with the eyes of an informer or “mole,” and are therefore profoundly vulnerable to the totalizing ideology that they say they want to reshape. The “Augustans,” for their part, are welcomed with a smile and escorted to the empty seat of the privileged spectator, who is seized unawares by the narrative and by its theatrical games.²⁰

18. I use Pfeiffer's language only by way of example: “vom ersten Wandel des Chaos in den Kosmos bis zum letzten Wandel des politischen Chaos in den neueren Kosmos der augustischen Ära” (1934, 48).

19. On this the analysis of Kennedy 1992 is critical.

20. I would not know how to place myself outside this contradiction.

Bibliography

ABBREVIATIONS

ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
GIF	<i>Giornale Italiano di Filologia</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
MD	<i>Materiali e Discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici</i>
PCPS	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
PLLS	<i>Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

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